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GAMEFAN

NEXT GENERATION VIDEO GAME MAGAZINE

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

GRAN TURISMO
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BLASTO
MARCH MADNESS
VIGILANTE 8
FRONT MISSION ALTERNATIVE
LEGEND OF MYSTICAL NINJA
BIO FREAKS
BANJO KAZOOIE
QUAKE 64
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Cover Story: SEGA'S BURNING RANGERS

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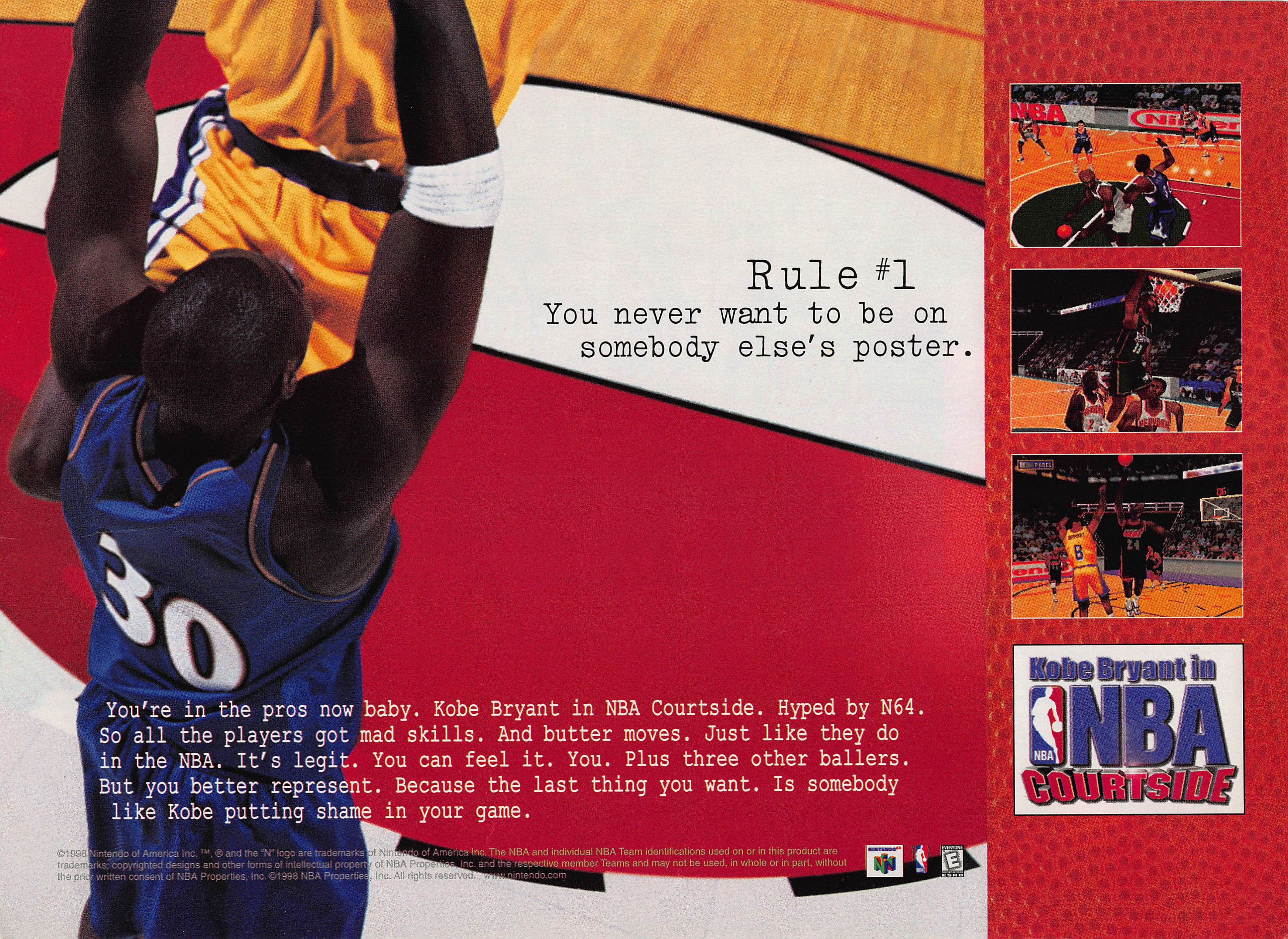
Dear GameFan Subscriber;

During the last several months, subscriber copies of GameFan have been shipped late, often after newsstand copies were on the shelves. We apologize for allowing this situation to continue for so long.

We have now corrected the problem. If you have been a subscriber over the last six months, any issues you have received will not be counted against your subscription. Your subscription will be extended for another six issues.

Your patience and loyalty to GameFan is greatly appreciated by all of us here. We look forward to having you be a continuing part of our team.

GAMEFAN Magazine



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Kobe Bryant in NBA COURTSIDE

Ed Zone



> *"You'll notice a lot of new faces this month as we've gone through a sort of renaissance and are re-committing ourselves to you, the loyal reader..."*

Welcome to another edition of the Ed Zone, the page that about one in ten GF readers regularly read. This month it's my turn in the hot seat as I'm subbing for our new Ed-in-Chief, Jay Puryear a.k.a Kid Fan, as he's on special assignment tracking down some hot info for our next issue. You'll notice a lot of new faces this month as we've gone through a sort of renaissance and are re-committing ourselves to you, the loyal reader as it's come to our attention (thank you Internet) that we've strayed somewhat from what GameFan's original mission was: To deliver the hottest news, best exclusives, and far and away the best import coverage outside of the Land of the Rising Sun. To that end, we're re-focusing our efforts on those things in the hopes that we can be what GF has always promised to be: The single best enthusiast magazine in the world.

Along with a brand-spankin' new staff (more next issue), we want to know what you want. What is your favorite part of GameFan? Ya' want more import coverage? More on anime? An expanded Postmeister or more reader art? Heck, even PC games. Any and everything is fair game; just tell us and we'll do our best to give it to you (no, we can't get you games early). And to that end, we've set up an email address for you to send all your complaints, comments, and critiques to. So if you're itchin' to tell us something you love or hate (don't worry, we can take the heat) fire 'em over to suggestions@gamefan.com. I promise that we'll read each and every complaint, comment, and criticism.

Well, that does it for my brief stint as Ed Zone writer extraordinaire. Enjoy the issue, and start getting those emails (snail mail too, the Postmeister is getting lonely) to us. In the meantime, I've got to go and find Monitaur-looks like he's back in business!

ECM

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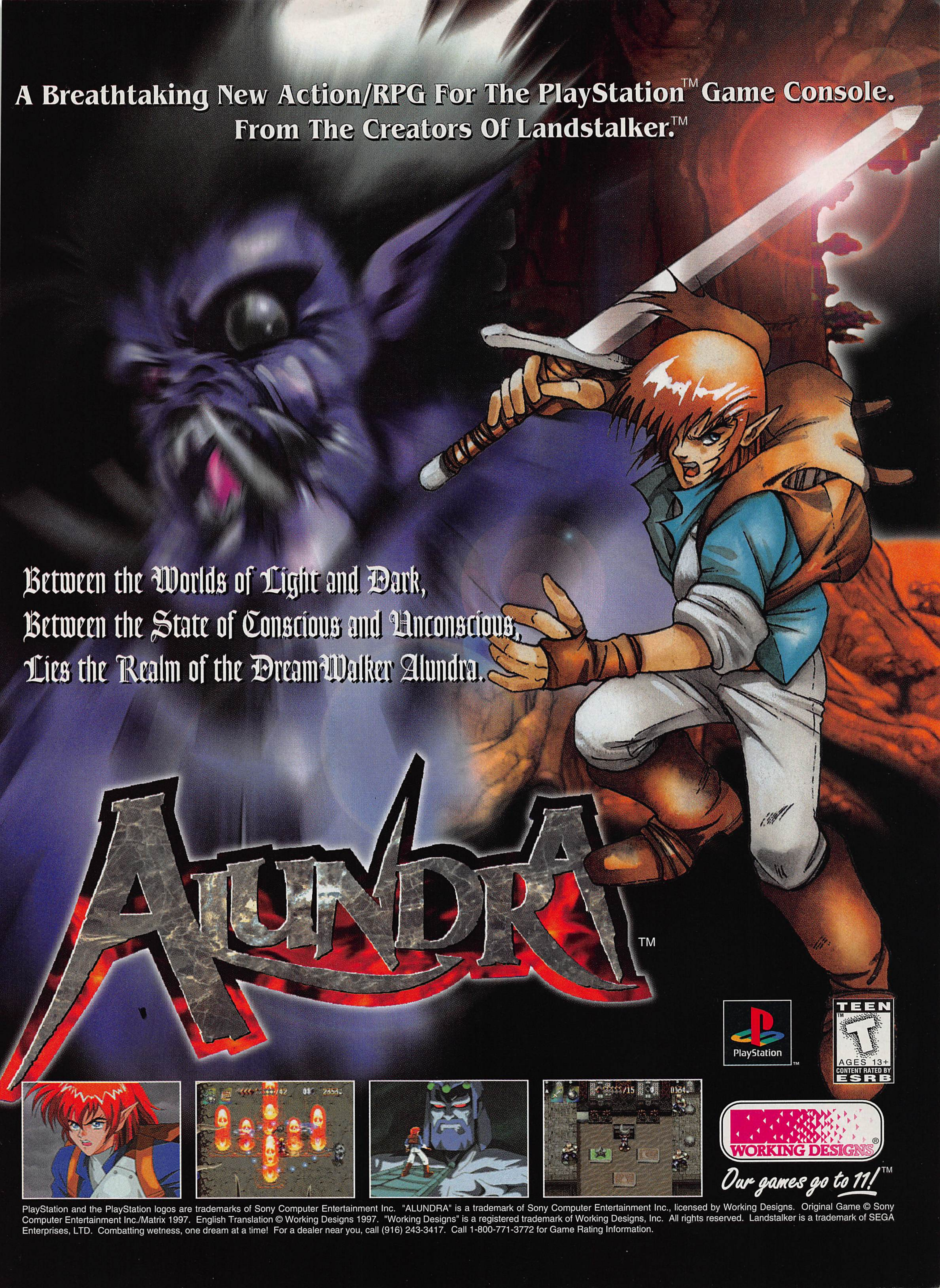
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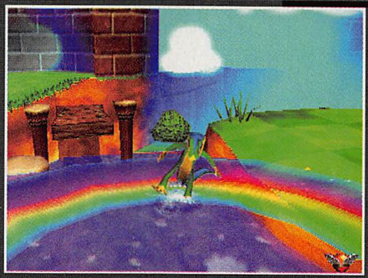
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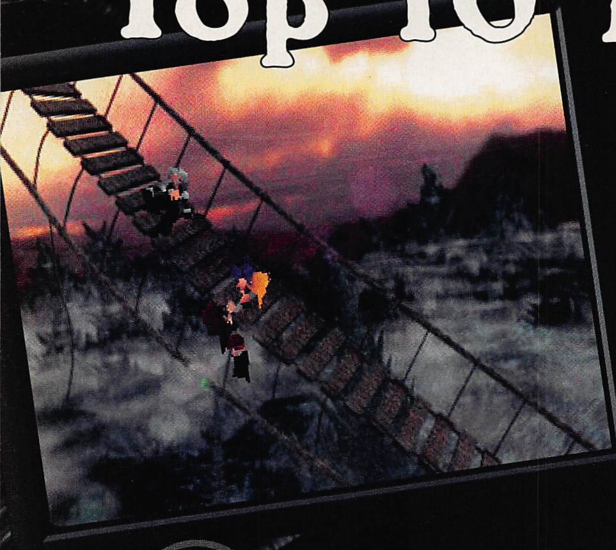
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Top 10 Most Wanted



1 **Final Fantasy VII**
READERS' TOP TEN
PS

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 1/30/98

READERS' TOP TEN

1. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
2. *GoldenEye* - N64
3. *Resident Evil 2* - PS
4. *Diddy Kong Racing* - N64
5. *Tomb Raider 2* -PS
6. *Dead or Alive* - PS
7. MegaMan X4 - PS
8. *Crash Bandicoot 2* - PS
9. *Castlevania: SOTN* - PS
10. *Tekken 3* - Arcade

READERS' MOST WANTED

1. *Metal Gear Solid* - PS
2. *Zelda 64* - N64
3. *Resident Evil 2* - PS
4. *Crash Bandicoot 2* - PS
5. *Final Fantasy Tactics* - PS



6. *Grandia* - SS
7. *Yoshi's Story* - N64
8. *Parasite Eve* - PS
9. *F-Zero 64*- N64
10. *Burning Rangers* - SS

GAMEFAN EDITORS' TOP TEN



1. *Grandia* - SS(Import)
2. *Gran Turismo* - PS(Import)
3. *Mystical Ninja 64* - N64
4. *Quake2* - PC
5. *Klonoa* - PS
6. *Resident Evil 2* - PS
7. *Gex 2* - PS
8. *FF Tactics* - PS
9. *Quake* - N64
10. *Death Tank Zwei* - SS



1. *Bloody Roar* - PS
2. *Grandia* - SS
3. *Saturn Bomberman* - SS
4. *NBA Live '98* - PS
5. *Road Rash II* - Genesis
6. *Twinkle Star Sprites* - SS
7. *Guardian Heroes* - SS
8. *Virtual On Netlink* -SS
9. *Quake* - PC
10. *MicroMachines V3* - PS



1. *Quake 2* - PC
2. *QuakeWorld* - PC
3. *Vampire Savior* - Arcade
4. *Virtua Fighter 3* - Arcade
5. *Wave Race 64* - N64
6. *Diddy Kong Racing* - N64
7. *G Darius* - Arcade
8. *Gex 2* - PS
9. *Critical Blow* - PS(Import)
10. *Twisted Metal 2* - PS



1. *Civilization II* - Mac
2. *NBA Live '98* -PSX
3. *Fallout* - Mac
4. *NHL '98* - PSX
5. *Poy Poy* - PSX
6. One - PSX
7. Hot Shots Golf - PSX
8. *Shadowrun* - Gen
9. *Final Fantasy Tactics* - PSX
10. *Resident Evil 2* - PSX



1. *Thunder Force 5* - SS
2. *One* - PS
3. *Battle Garegga* - SS
4. *Shining Force 3* - SS
5. *Shienryu* - SS
6. *Final Fantasy Tactics* - PS
7. *Goldeneye* - N64
8. *Dynamite Headdy* - Genesis
9. *Einhander* - PS
10. *Klonoa* - PS



1. *Starcraft* - PC
2. *Resident Evil 2* - PS
3. *Parasite Eve* - PS
4. *Gex 2* - PS
5. *Final Fantasy Tactics* - PS
6. *SF II Alpha 2* - Arcade
7. *Bomberman 64* - N64
8. *MicroMachines V3* - PS
9. *Warcraft 2* - PC
10. *Psi 5 Trading Company* - C-64

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All you have to do to enter the drawing is write down a list of your top 10 favorite games and the 10 games you want the most that aren't out yet, on a piece of paper or a postcard then send them to: GAMEFAN TOP TEN, 5137 Clareton Dr., Suite 210 Agoura Hills, CA 91301

First Prize: Pocket GameBoy

Second Prize: Your choice of one of the Picks of the Month in Viewpoint.

Third Prize: A FREE year of GameFan! The best magazine in the universe!

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Drawing is limited to One (1) entry per person per month. Drawings will be held on the 21st of each month. The three (3) winners will be notified by mail and listed on this page. For a complete list of rules and regulations write: GameFan Top Ten with self addressed & stamped envelope.

DEVELOPER'S TOP TEN

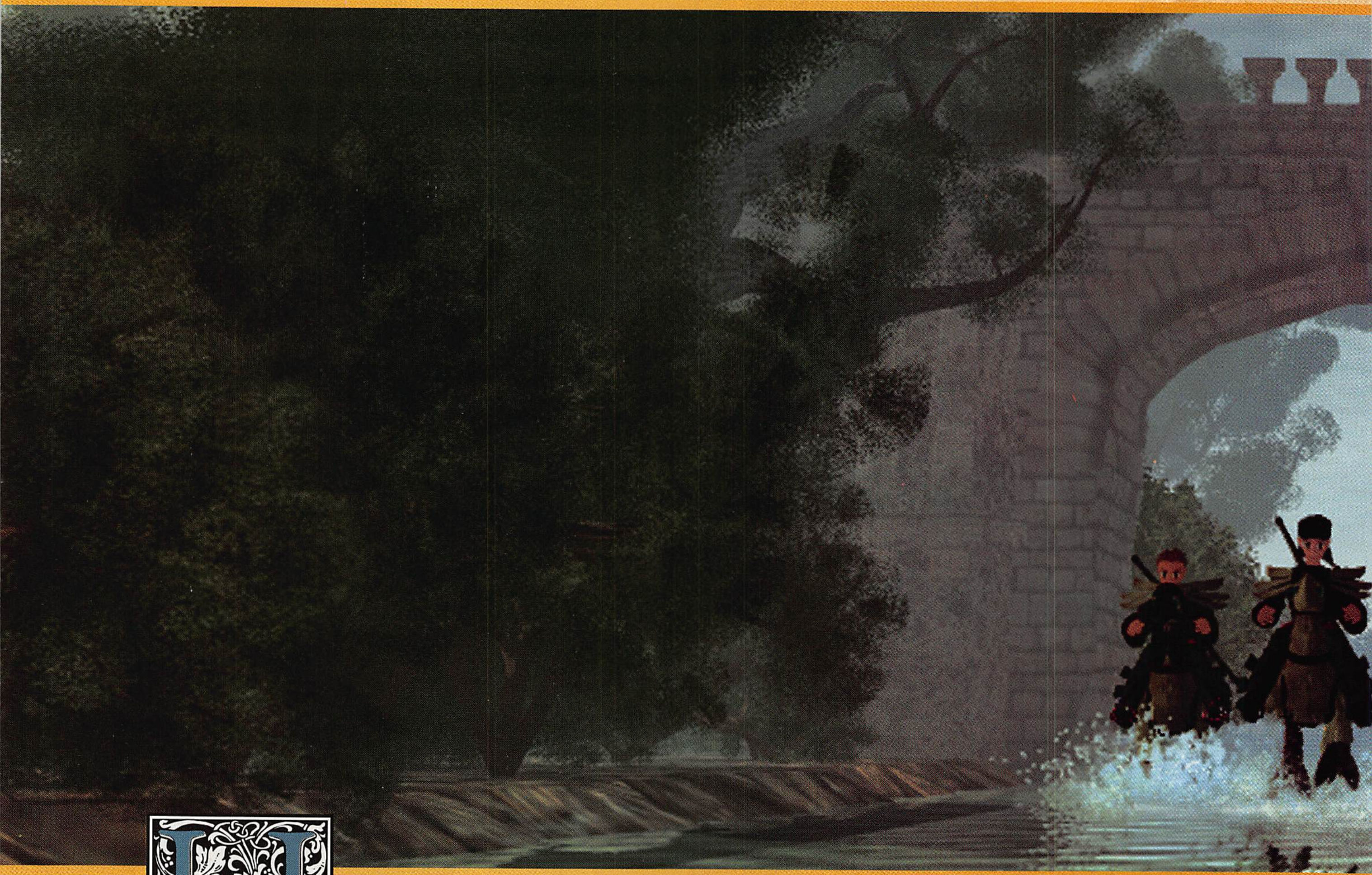
This Month's Guest: Jake Kazdal, 3D Animator: Boss Game Studios

1. *Soul Blade* - PS
2. *Diddy Kong Racing* - N64
3. *Castlevania:SOTN* - PS
4. *Goldeneye* - N64
5. *VF3* - Arcade
6. *NFL Blitz*- Arcade
7. *SF Zero 2* - SS
8. *Yoshi's Island* - SNES
9. *Zelda: Link's Awakening* - Gameboy
10. *Quake 2* - PC





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PlayStation

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VIEWPOINT

Legend
- **G**raphics
- **C**ontrol
- **P**lay mechanics
- **M**usic
- **O**riginality



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X-Men COTA
PlayStation
Acclaim
Fighting

Riddle me this Batman: why would anyone want to buy a slow running, frame lacking, PS version of *X-Men:COTA* when the vastly superior *Marvel Super Heroes* is already out?! PS *X-Men* is still a decent playing beat 'em up (albeit marred by the loss of speed), and I suppose die hard PS owning Capcom fans will be happy just to add another 2D fighter to their collection, but the fact is, if you're that big a Capcom fan you'd get a Saturn. Even though the Saturn version is also lacking frames, it's still a better conversion than this.

G 7 · C 8 · P 8 · M 7 · O 7 · **75**

A long time in coming, *X-Men* for the PS is a prime example of too little, too late, and much too old of a game. What game players are still waiting for this, and are they receiving the high-priced psychiatry they so desperately deserve?! This is a very choppy conversion of a fighting game that wasn't of any interest once all the cheap combos and unpleasant character (mis)matchups were discovered. Even as gut-busting as the voice samples are (e.g., "I scream!"), I can't recommend this decrepit antique.

G 8 · C 7 · P 6 · M 6 · O 7 · **64**

Cough, hack, patooie...oh the humanity!!! First off, this game is competing in a home market full of better 2-D fighters. Secondly, this game is way too old; fond trips to my local arcade a few YEARS ago to play this game are still intact, and I wouldn't walk next door to buy this metallic coaster. Finally, and most importantly, it sucks. Choppy animation does not begin to describe graphic movement or lack thereof. Get it only if you were a truly hardcore *X-men* fan...that or on the bounds of insanity.

G 6 · C 8 · P 7 · M 6 · O 6 · **62**



SkullMonkeys
PlayStation
EA
Platformer

This little gem showed up at the *GF* offices back in early November. I played it for about ten minutes and was instantly hooked. While the majority of people at *GF* laugh at me for even thinking that this could have been PS game of the year (back when the original release date was December), but it is traditional platform action in the Nintendo mold (*DKC*, *Mario*, etc.) and in that regard it delivers like no other 32-bit game. Those that have grown really sick of all the supposed flash of next-gen titles should take this one for a spin. just as a reminder of what a truly great game should be. I pray that this game does well (it had better, *GF* readers) and that the Neverhood gives us another one, next time with cel animation. I hope, I hope, I hope...

G 8 · C 10 · P 10 · M 10 · O 8 · **95**

Which ever way you look at it, *Skull Monkeys* is old school 2D platforming action given a 32-bit coat of paint. Now, personally, I don't have a problem with that. Traditional platformers are few and far between these days, and *Skull Monkeys* does the genre proud. It's tremendous fun, challenging, and above all, totally wacked out. Just don't expect any major gameplay innovations. I will say this though: the first time I heard the 'Bonus Round' song I laughed so hard I had to stop playing. *Skull Monkeys* is as bizarre as they come.

G 8 · C 9 · P 9 · M 10 · O 5 · **89**

It's not often that a game on the scale of *Skull Monkeys* comes out. Developed by the same programmers who made *Earthworm Jim*, one of my favorite platformers, this game is loaded with the same unique humor/oddities and general excellence. Throw in the best sound effects you'll ever find anywhere and some really strange but excellent music. *Skull Monkeys* is in a separate category from the rest in terms of originality, sounds, and even graphics (Claymation a la Gumby returns). It looks great, plays great, sounds sweet. What is there not to like about it?

G 9 · C 7 · P 8 · M 9 · O 9 · **93**



Mystical Ninja
PlayStation
Konami
3D Platformer

Konami makes a large splash in the N64 3D platformer genre with *Mystical Ninja 64*. I was a HUGE fan of these games on SNES and PS and am glad to say that the tradition continues in the 64-bit arena. Gigantic environments, next to no fog, clean colors and a mostly smooth frame rate round the graphics package out. Music is just OK, but the gameplay will have any fan of *Mario 64* glued to their seat for extended periods. While not as revolutionary as plumber boy, it's still great fun and recommended to all action fans.

G 8 · C 9 · P 9 · M 7 · O 8 · **89**

I REALLY like this game. I wasn't that impressed at first (the frame rate can be offputting at times) but the more I played it, the more I warmed up to it. The graphics are amazing, even for N64 with excellent character models, huge environments, clean textures and best of all - no fog. The gameplay has been modeled on *Mario 64*, with a similar control system and camera set-up, and it works really well. But most surprising (to me at least) is the music - easily one of the best soundtracks on the N64. Goemon fans rejoice! *MN64* is awesome!

G 9 · C 9 · P 9 · M 9 · O 8 · **94**

Take elements of *Mario 64*, combine old skool tactics from the *Zelda* series, and add a dash of that japanese quirkiness from many of their imports, and you'll get the zany adventures of our spiky, blue-haired ninja and his friends. Huge playing environments guarantee long-term exploration and and though from an initial standpoint it might be mistaken for a new *Mario 64* clone, *Mystical Ninja* adds so much more gameplay depth, it should be included in any N64 fans lineup. And the music score is catchy, though at times it can be way too stomach-churningly cute. But still, it's not *Zelda*... WHERE'S *ZELDA*?

G 9 · C 8 · P 9 · M 8 · O 9 · **93**



Fighter's Destiny
PlayStation
Ocean
Fighting

Fighter's Destiny: It's about time the N64 gets a real fighter. While this won't sell any systems and it can't really hold a candle to upcoming games like *Bloody Roar* on PS and *Vampire Savior* on SS, it's far and away the best one on N64 (I know, real hard to believe). Genki has done a fine job in putting this one together and all you N64 fighting freaks better snap this one up as it's gonna be a while before anything else shows up (*MK4*, anyone?). A solid fighter, and as good as it currently gets on Nintendo's fun machine.

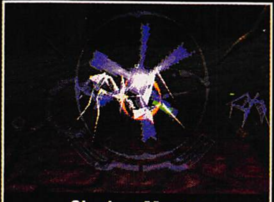
G 6 · C 8 · P 8 · M 6 · O 8 · **78**

The fighting genre is sorely lacking in the N64's lineup, and while *Fighter's Destiny* doesn't fully rectify the damage, it puts healing salve on a sore wound. Though probably the best fighter on the N64 (*Killer Instinct Gold* is not my cup of tea), the game moves rather sluggishly and the detail of the characters... well, there really isn't any. The point system is a new and refreshing change adding more finesse to the game, but there's not enough variety or number of moves . All in all not bad, but when compared to the first 3D fighters on the Saturn and PSX (*Virtual Fighter 2* and *Tekken*), it's destiny is not amongst the elite.

G 7 · C 7 · P 8 · M 6 · O 8 · **81**

Man, this is a tough month for me. We have *Critical Blow*, which I played more of and I think had a much better control system, yet I give *Fighter's Destiny* the better score. That's because I think it's tried to be different and unique, and deserves some credit for that. This is certainly the best N64 fighting game out there, but take that as you will. For now, I really don't care much for the game, but I'll be interested to see what could be done with it in future sequels with more refinement and work.

G 7 · C 6 · P 7 · M 7 · O 8 · **75**



Shadow Master
PlayStation
Psygnosis
1st Person Shooter

I think Rodney Mathews is a great artist, and *Shadow Master* successfully incorporates the look and feel of his art into a video game. The engine is a miracle of modern science, throwing around a mad amount of extremely detailed polygon models at speeds so smooth you'll want to bring a sick bag. I'm not really a big fan of vehicle based first person shooters but Hammerhead have handled the momentum issue adeptly, and your buggy controls extremely well (with practice). The gameplay is a little repetitive, but the blazing visuals provide a strong incentive to play on.

G 9 · C 9 · P 8 · M 8 · O 7 · **85**

Smooth as silk. You'd better have a good supply of Dramamine, 'cause this game'll make you seasick. No slowdown and 60fps make this a marvel to watch... and a joy to play. Based on the drawings of British comic book artist, Mathews, *Shadow Master*'s unique look adds needed spice. The high level of difficulty is going to turn some off, though. Use an analog controller for the maximum effect.

G 9 · C 8 · P 8 · M 7 · O 8 · **87**

I'm not sure what to say about this one. If there is a single company out there capable of working graphic miracles on the PS, that company is Psygnosis. Seemingly on a monthly basis they craft hardware-defying games. And while *Shadow Master* continues that fine tradition of visually eye-wrenching graphics - 60 FPS, intense lighting, and smooth textures - it falls prey to the usual Psygnosis shortcomings: Repetitive gameplay, and ultimately low replay value. Not to say I didn't sit down with this one for a good little while (who wouldn't with its *Starship Troopers*-inspired graphics), but it just gets old a little too quick. Still, a solid shooter for the 3D corridor crowd.

G 9 · C 8 · P 7 · M 6 · O 7 · **80**

Hail to the King! Shooting games don't get much better than this. More stages than you can count (new, extra hard stages have been created for the PlayStation) which test accuracy, dexterity, and hand-eye coordination. You MUST play this game with two players to get better and experience the madness of stealing other targets (Watch those civilians!). If you don't have two Guncons... get them. If you don't have another player... get one. Lock the door and unplug the telephone. Don't plan on coming out for a while.

G 8 C 8 P 10 M 8 O 9 — **95**

If there is any game to convince PS owners that they need to get another Guncon, it's *Point Blank*. The graphics may be simple, and the mechanics may be straightforward, but *PB* is 100% pure addiction. Who would of thought that a *Carnival* style shooting/puzzle game could be so much fun? Namco, that's who! As with all their arcade conversions they've added some exclusive features for the PS version, but really they're just the icing on top of an incredibly tasty cake. Brilliant!

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 8 O 9 — **92**

Point Blank, the modern *Carnival*-type shooter from Namco, was a pleasant surprise to see in arcades months ago, and even more of a miracle to see in my "CD junkyard" of a living room. The appeal of this fun, recreational, skill-based diversion is in its simplistic, albeit creative, presentation of a basic series of projectile-oriented puzzles that are funny, fast, and infinitely masterable. The urge to see a few more of the multitude of amok-filled boards is overwhelming, as is the incredible desire to beat your old scores!

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 6 O 10 — **92**



Point Blank
PlayStation
Namco
Gun Game

Well, me and SubD sat down to a few rounds of *Critical Blow* when it first came in, and after a while everyone here pretty much wrote the game off. Sure, Banpresto tried to win my vote with Chiaki, a character so SNK-esque that it's scary. However, I then tried out the "Trading Mode" - a feature that lets you (sort of) customize any of the game's characters with new abilities and moves. This is the game's saving grace, as it's an awesome idea, and makes this brilliantly mediocre title worth the time when pitting souped-up characters between friends. If you'll only play it by yourself, however, don't bother.

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 8 O 8 — **86**

In the endless mire of fighters, only a choice few really standout from the muck and mirages surrounding them. Those few elegant creations have an enthralling set of characters, amazing interrelations between strategies and counter plans, combos that would be at least fatal (and at most cause a complete massacre) if they were to be performed in reality, and moves that look like ones you wish your feeble mortal body could execute. This game looks like it has what it takes. With the card system of character customizing, cool movements, brilliant super techniques, sweet control, and obscene combos, this game gives a sublime impression upon my wizened tastebuds.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 7 O 9 — **91**

You must forgive the newbie to my left: He's a very sick boy. I was pretty much left with a bad taste in my mouth after playing this polygonal tragedy. Nothing like two marionettes beating the snot out of one another. Poor character designs and weak control do not a good fighter make. Why on earth must I be subjected to these polygon monstrosities every month?! Just when I think I've gotten away with not writing a full-blown review they rope me in for viewpoint <urgh>. Anyway, the card system is decent, but this game is minor league all the way - this one is headed for frisbee-ville.

G 7 C 6 P 6 M 7 O 7 — **65**



Critical Blow
PlayStation
Banpresto
Fighting

Gosh, I was never good at *Rampage* when it first came out in the arcades. And now, I kick ECM's arse in this redone, revamped version of the classic. It's a nice ravaging romp, especially if you have two other players to join in your duty of demolition. However, the kick it gave me back in the day is missing here, and I think it's cuz of a realization how senseless and pointless this game really is (i.e. Go to a town, destroy, and move to the next town). Somehow way back when, it was cool, but now, with great multiplayer games like *Poy Poy*, *Bomberman*, and *MicroMachines V3*, it's just way too simple. For this gamer, it's just a sentimental novelty... ECM loves this title.

G 8 C 8 P 7 M 6 O 6 — **74**

I loved the arcade, PS, and SS versions of this game and it's even better on the N64. With beyond arcade-perfect graphics and elements that were missing from the other console versions, this game rocks. Thankfully they saw fit to put the 3-player mode back in, so now the odd-man-out can play too. Smash buildings, eat people, and bash fellow employees that can't recognize classic gameplay if it came up and bit their heads off <grrrr>. Anyway, skip all of Midway's other offerings (except N64 *Micro Machines*) and pick this up with due haste - you'll have a blast, I promise.

G 9 C 8 P 7 M 6 O 8 — **88**

Get ready to rock the non-mutated populace in a royal-rumble of mighty, building-bashing, movie monsters! The classic party game (well at least for those of you that hold your get-togethers in musty arcades) has been revamped (new features abound), converted (quite well I might add), and packaged for your savage perusal. As the succulent morsels in tens of cities scream "Gorillas, Werewolves, Lizards, oh my!" you can bust through detailed screens of fast moving sprite-based nirvana; eating, destroying, and defecating on what you may. The action is intense, the fighting is furious, and the fun is endless... Buy it and release all your pent-up frustrations with brazen bestiality.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 6 O 8 — **88**



Rampage
Nintendo 64
Midway
Monster Sim

Oh *Quake*... how I love thee... let me count the ways (1) on the PC, (2) on the Saturn, and (3) now on the N64. I have to say that the same *Quake* gameplay from the PC is all here; the sounds are, surprisingly to me, all here; and the awesome GL *Quake* graphics are... almost there. I don't know why, but sometimes the graphics, especially on closeups, get way too distorted. And my final gripe, *Quake* is a way better multiplayer game and having only two players is almost an atrocity. But don't get me wrong; if you're a fan of *Turok* and *Goldeneye*, *Quake 64* is your ticket to 3D corridor fragging madness.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 8 — **92**

What you've got here is an excellent port of id's corridor classic, complete with GL visual enhancements, nearly all the levels and a decent two player mode. The N64 controller is the next best thing to a mouse (using the *Turok* style setup) and the gameplay is 100% proof. I even like the *Doom 64* style ambient background noises that replace the PC's redbook soundtrack. However, as a singleplayer game it pales in comparison with the likes of *Goldeneye*. Thank God Midway listened to the press and added deathmatch!

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 5 — **91**

Quake on the PC is easily one of the best, if not clearly the best, multiple player masterpieces ever to grace the glazed cornea of this gamer's eyes. *GlQuake* does it one better by transforming the pixellated graphics into images of realistic majesty. What the programmers have done is squeeze the miracle of *GlQuake* into the blessing of a console, the N64, but a sizable amount of its beauty didn't make the trip (such as texture resolution and dynamic lighting). Unfortunately, multiplayer suffers severely from obstructive flashbend sprites on rockets, smurf-sized characters, and the ability to see where your opponent is at all times... And, the N64 needs a mouse (er, rat).

G 7 C 6 P 8 M 7 O 8 — **82**



Quake 64
Nintendo 64
Midway
Corridor Shooter

RPG of the year? At the very least! Even having a limited grasp of Japanese, I was easily able to enjoy this game tremendously. I hate to say it, but I can't believe my Saturn is handling something like this: Huge environments; clean, detailed textures; a frame rate that runs from the low 20's up to a solid 30; and a soundtrack that will bring tears to your eyes. On top of that, a storyline that will make you laugh, cry, and pound your fists in rage. A truly remarkable game that SoA HAS to bring out over here. C'mon Sega, do it for your fans-they really deserve it.

G 10 C 9 P 10 M 10 O 10 — **99**

Quite simply one of the best RPGs of all time, not to mention one of the top ten Saturn games ever. Truly shocking graphics and music; a storyline that is more lighthearted than *FFVII*, but still epic enough to have you on the edge of your seat; awesome CG and a well implemented battle system that is simply a joy to experience. The fact that Sega isn't bringing *Grandia* over here speaks volumes about their handling of the Saturn in general. Lets hope whoever made that decision was let go in the recent cuts.

G 10 C 9 P 10 M 10 O 10 — **97**

This game should not exist on the Saturn. Yet, here I am, playing one of the best RPG's since *Final Fantasy 7* (considering that *FF7* is one of the best). Graphically gorgeous, musically melodious, and outrageously original, *Grandia* shows that the Saturn is far from dead. With on the fly polygon power from Zeus himself, and a story-line rich in drama, action, and good humor, *Grandia* is definitely one of the best games ever made on the Saturn. If SoA is smart (which, lately, I have to argue that they're not), they'll put it out here as soon as they can. All Saturn owners, this is the one you've been waiting for.

G 10 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 10 — **98**



Grandia
Saturn
Game Arts/ESP
RPG

You would think playing a cutesy teen witch flying around shooting pumpkins and what-not would be a little out of a hardcore game player's league. Well, surprisingly so, *Cotton 2* is not only a great shooter, but a fantastic one. With spellbinding special effects, beautiful graphics, and one of the most original gameplay mechanics to come out on a shooter, my only two complaints are the ease to finish this game, and the short length. Still, if an original shooter is what you've been looking for, import games are not a problem to you, and you can deal with japanese girly cheers ("IKUZO!!"), then I highly recommend *Cotton 2*.

G 9 C 8 P 10 M 8 O 9 — **94**

Cutesy, yes. Exciting... definitely. *Cotton 2* is another in a long line of sidescrolling shooters that will lavish you with dazzling graphics and dead-on playability. As a Broom Hilda, in her formative years, you'll get the chance to blast a myriad of unusual baddies with an even stranger assortment of weapons. The graphics and sound are stellar, and the look fresh. How developers keep resuscitating this genre is beyond me... but I'm not complaining.

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 8 — **88**

Cotton is back in 32-bit style! A gorgeous shooter with new play mechanics to boot, this is an import you need to get. Vibrant colors, two modes of play (arcade and Saturn), two-player simultaneous gameplay, RAM cart support (1 or 4 meg), and absolutely beautiful graphics. This isn't for those of you out there that can't make it through a game without polygons or lens flares, but if you love gorgeous hand drawn graphics, hot shooter gameplay, and the ubiquitous dose of Japanese cuteness, this is a game for you. Length may be the only letdown, but don't let that sway you, this one is hot!

G 9 C 9 P 8 M 7 O 7 — **90**



Cotton 2
Saturn
Success
Shooting

Hocus Pocus

ENTER THE GAMEFAN HOCUS POCUS GIVEAWAY!

GRAND PRIZE:
A GXTV

FIRST PRIZE:
VIEWPOINT GAME OF YOUR CHOICE

SECOND PRIZE:
POCKET GAMEBOY

THIRD PRIZE:
1-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION TO GAMEFAN



GXTV is the world's first video game TV with hyper-amplified sound and graphics. Enhance the thrill of gaming with adjustable speaker doors, stereo surround sound and a 15-watt sub woofer. Plus, the intense screen graphics will make you feel like your head's right inside the game. GXTV is also a 181-channel, 13" stereo TV with two A/V inputs, stereo headphone jack, backlit remote control and tilt/swivel stand. So whatcha waitin' for? Send in those codes and maybe you can win one of these GXTVs for yourself!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS MONTH'S WINNERS!



The mighty Monitaur seeks the finest cheats, secrets and tips known to humanity, and we need them from YOU!! We'll look over all the codes you send and award a magnificent Grand Prize every single month! Remember, no cheap codes from previously published US magazines! Winners will be drawn each month and displayed in the only place where cheaters prosper. (Current subscribers who win a subscription will receive a one-year extension.)

SEND YOUR CARDS AND LETTERS TO:
Hocus Pocus
5137 Clareton Drive
Suite 210
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

grand prize winner:
thomas j keeling
wantagh, ny

first prize winner:
leo gibbs
brooklyn, ny

second prize winner:
jimmy liao
stockton, ca

third prize winner:
daniel postaer
los angeles, ca

Nba Live 98
Extra teams, hidden options

NBA Live '98 - Extra teams, secrets

Programmers can ball with the best in this game... well, at least in *NBA Live*. To play teams of designers, programmers, and others associates of the title, at the main screen, press the Circle button, which will bring up other options. Highlight Rosters, and press the X button. From there, choose Custom Teams, and enter the following City and Team name below, to play the respective teams (Note - words are caps sensitive):



City: EA
Team Name: Europals
City: Hitmen
Team Name: Coders
City: Hitmen
Team Name: Earplugs
City: Hitmen
Team Name: Idlers
City: Hitmen
Team Name: Pixels
City: QA
Team Name: Campers
City: QA
Team Name: Testtubes



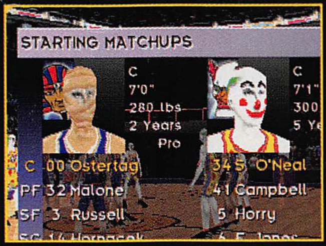
City: TNT
Team Name: Blasters

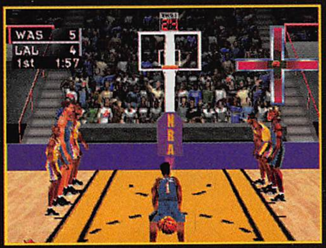
You Shoot like your grandma! -
When shooting freethrows, hold R1 when shooting and your player will perform the school-yard granny shot!

Secrets-
To enable the Secrets Menu, start any normal game and forward to the User Setup Screen. Start a new player name entering the word "Secrets." Voila!!
From here enter the following codes in the Secrets Menu:

Seaweed - Underwater basketball (literally)
Scary - Home Team becomes clowns, aliens, or mummies
Freaky - Away Team becomes clowns, aliens, or mummies
Cloak home - Home team selected player becomes invisible
Cloak away - Away team selected player becomes invisible
Lizard - Home team blends with court
Reptile - Away team blends with court
Eyepatch - Create players with an eyepatch
Monocle - Create players with a monocle





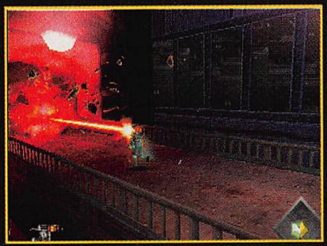


One
Password Codes

ONE: Password codes

Having trouble with this jaw-dropping, exploding extravaganza? Well, besides being a pretty hard game, *ONE's* special weapons are pretty hard to get.
Fortunately enough, the following codes will give access to all six levels in the game and enable all weapons in the game. When using any special weapons, keep pressing select to reload all weapons infinitely. Enter the following codes in the Load menu:





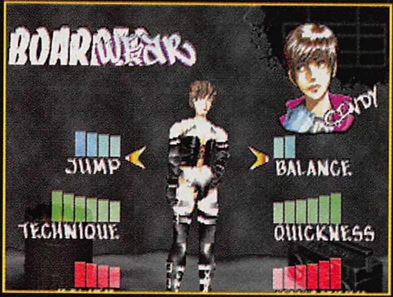


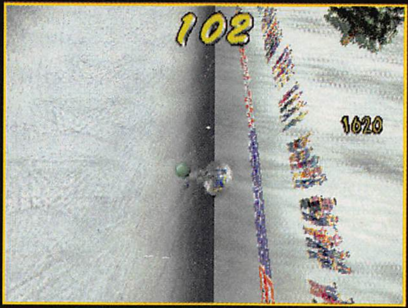
HEVYFEET - Level Select
MAXPOWER - All weapons selectable

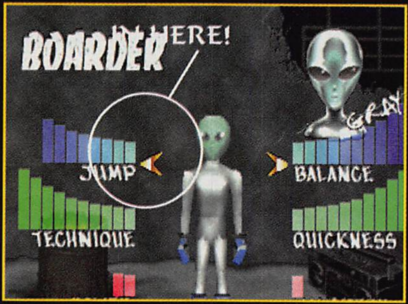
Coolboarders 2: New outfits, secret characters

The ladies of the slope have a few garments in their suitcase that they wouldn't be caught dead in snowboarding. Lucky for us, to play Erin in her Sailor Moon-esque uniform, and Cindy as a gimp, on the main menu screen, highlight "Competition" and press down, R1, up, R1, down, R2, up, R2, up, up, R1, down, down, R2.

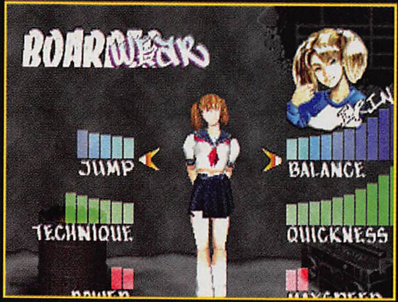


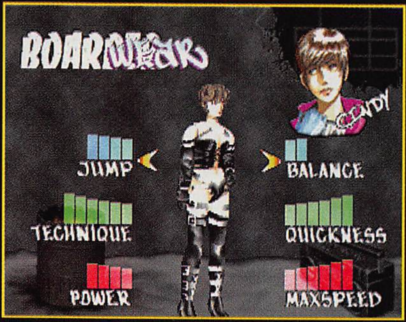






To play the Alien and Snowman complete the Big Air Master Mode (100 jumps) without continuing. The Alien has rather slow speed, but incredible agility and technique, while Snow Momma is the exact opposite with weak showoff skills, but great acceleration and velocity.





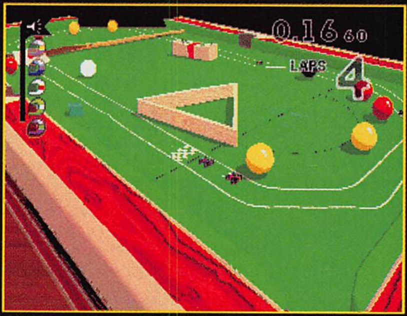
Micro Machines V3 - Gameplay codes, always use tanks

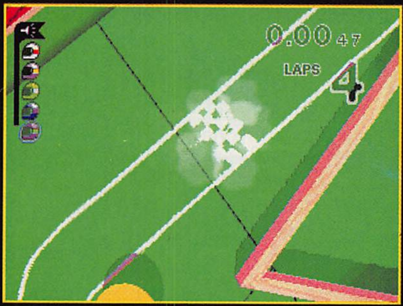
To enable these special gameplay codes, enter the following commands during gameplay:

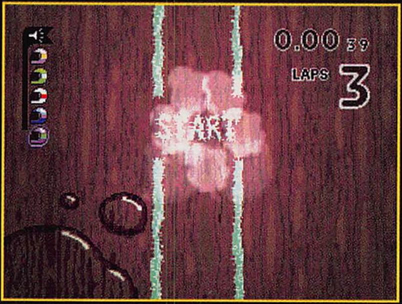
Debug Mode - During the race, press Square, up, down, down, Square, Circle, Circle, Triangle, X. A confirmation sound will play if you've entered it correctly. Now, you can perform four different functions:

1) Select + X button - Exits out of the race in 1st place
2) Select + any D-pad commands - changes camera angles
3) Select + L2 or R2 - zooms camera in and out
4) Press X button, Triangle button, Circle button, and Square button - blows up all cars

Tanks for me! - To play with tanks on all tracks in a multiplayer game, enter "TANKS4ME" when you select your character. You'll play tanks on every track, though you'll find it's hard to race a tank on water.









Resident Evil 2 - Dangohead Special!!

So, you didn't get enough last month, eh?? Need to ingest more helpings of secrets from the world of survival horror??? Lucky for you, *Resident Evil 2* holds more secrets within its digital tomes when compared to its predecessor.

Secret Weapons:

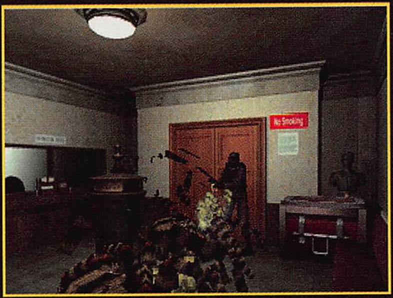
Even with its large inventory of heavy hitting weapons, there are three hidden weapons, depending upon how you perform in the game. First off, to get any of the three hidden weapons, you must get an "A" rank when you finish the game. For the Submachine Gun, complete any "R" scenario game without using a Health Spray. To get the Gatling Gun, finish any "R" scenario game without saving. Finally, to get the renowned Rocket Launcher finish every scenario with a time of two hours and thirty minutes... or less

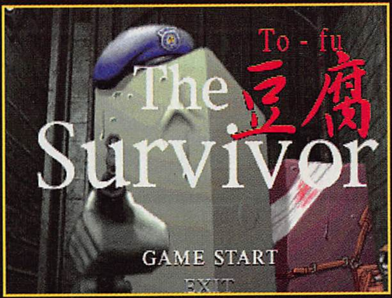
The 4th Survivor:

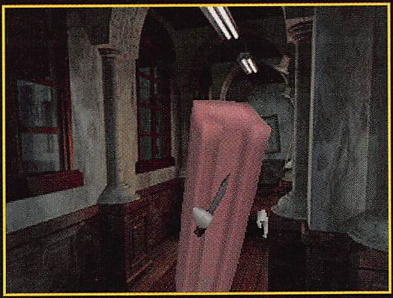
Do you have skill? Sure, you might have beaten the game, finished both "R" scenarios, and have the rapturous Rocket Launcher in your inventory... but the question still remains... do you have the hardcore skills of a true *Resident Evil 2* master? If you believe yourself to be one of the exterminating elite, finish any "R" scenario with no saving, no health sprays, and as quick a time as you can (hmm...preferably less than 2 hours and 30 minutes). You will be awarded with the mini-game "The 4th Survivor." You play the role of Hunk, an Umbrella agent that must escape the house of horrors to deliver the G-Virus. Not only are there no ribbons to save your progress, but there's no extra ammo or items to pick up! Good Luck!

Agent Tofu: International Bean Curd of Mystery

And you thought the 4th Survivor game was the only secret, eh? Well, save the 4th Survivor mini-game and play through all scenarios for a total of four times. Once done, you'll be able to play the secret Umbrella agent, Tofu! Armed only with a knife, Tofu may seem impossible to complete the mini-game with, but you'll find him not only a bit slippery, but extremely hardy. In some cases, you'll find him easier to finish the mini-game than Hunk!









Game Shark codes:

Tomb Raider II-
Plentiful loads of Game Shark codes for your Tomb Raiding enjoyment!

Infinite Oxygen - All levels	8008C4FE 0708
Have All Special Items - All levels	80088B34 0009
Have All 3 Secrets - All levels	800DE682 000F
Infinite Large Medi Packs	80088AB8 03E7
Infinite Small Medi Packs	80088ABA 03E7
Infinite Shotgun Ammo	8008C5B4 0012
Infinite Harpoon Ammo	8088C5B8 0006
Infinite Flares	80088AAA 03E7
Infinite M-16 Ammo	8008C5C0 0050
Infinite Automatic Pistol Ammo	8008C5AC 0028
Infinite Grenade Launcher Ammo	8008C5BC 0008
Have All Weapons	80088AA0 000B
Infinite Uzis Ammo	8008C5B0 00A0
Spider Lara (Climb all walls)	8008C4F6 0001

Level Modifier - Enter "80089038 00XX" where XX is replaced by one of the following:

01	The Great Wall
02	Venice
03	Bartoli's Hideout
04	Opera House
05	Offshore Rig
06	Diving Area
07	40 Fathoms
08	Wreck of the Maria Doria
09	Living Quarters
0A	The Deck
0B	Tibetan Foothills
0C	Barkang Monastery
0D	Catacombs of the Talion
0E	Ice Palace
0F	Temple of Xian
10	Floating Islands
11	The Dragon's Lair
12	Home Sweet Home

Bloody Roar: complete move list and secrets

Abbreviations:
- f - forward
- d/f - diagonally down forward
- u/f - diagonally up forward
- b - backward
- d/b - diagonally down back
- u/b - diagonally up back
- d - down K - kick attack button
- u - up button
- P - punch attack
- B- beast attack button

Greg: Possessing great hurling strength, getting caught by a throw from him... well, just hope you're not on the receiving end of one.





P	High punch
f+P	High slam
d/f+P	Mid punch
d+P	Low jab
db+P	Backhand
b+P	Double strike
ub/u/uf+P	Jumping strike
K	Face stomp kick
f+K	Step-in mid kick
df+K	Low kick
d+K	Shin kick
db+K	Low kick
b+K	Back lifting kick
ub/u/uf+K	Jumping rising kick

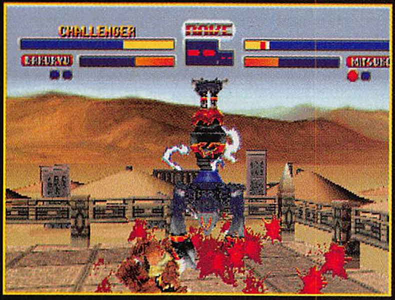
Beast mode:

B	Face swipe
f+B	Backhand
df+B	Double hammer
d+B	Low slash
db+B	Low double swipe
b+B	Face slap
ub/u/uf+B	Lifting slap

Special moves:

QCF+P	Low grab & swing
QCB+P	Wind up punch
(hold b+P to hold the wind up)	
QCF+K	Lifting throw
QCF+B	Ragdoll toss
QCB+B	Lifting throw
Counter:	QCB+K

Bakuryu: Small, speedy, and sneaky, Bakuryu is extremely deadly; don't let his diminutive size deceive you.



Moves:

P	High punch
f+P	Turning swipe
df+P	Rising mid strike
d+P	Crouching punch
db+P	Leg strike
b+P	Turning backhand
ub/u/uf+P	Jump over enemy
K	High kick
f+K	Forward flip kick
df+K	Shin kick
d+K	Low kick
db+K	Sweep
b+K	Revolving side kick
ub/u/uf+K	Flip kick

Beast mode:

B	High slash
f+B	Step-in mid slash
df+B	Slide attack
d+B	Low slash
db+B	Uppercut slash
b+B	Step-back slash
ub/u/uf+B	Jump-in slash

Special moves:

QCF+P	Air throw
QCF+K	Ninjitsu - behind
QCB+K	Ninjitsu - aerial
QCF+B	Stabbing throw
QCB+B	Slashing uppercut
Counter:	QCB+P

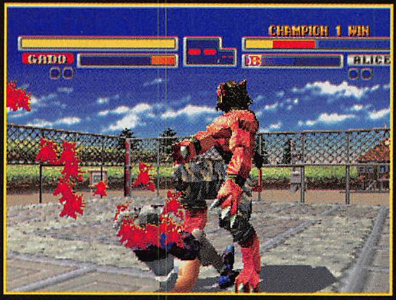
Gado:
Lions are known for their power, and Gado should be known for his as well. His powerful moves counterbalance any weaknesses he has.

Moves:

P	High punch
f+P	Elbow
df+P	Mid punch
d+P	Low punch
db+P	Spinning low punch
b+P	Turn-around elbow
ub/u/uf+P	Jumping chop
K	High side kick
f+K	Knee
df+K	Mid kick
d+K	Low kick
db+K	Sweep
b+K	High roundhouse
ub/u/uf+K	Jumping stomp kick

Beast mode:

B	High swipe
f+B	Mid stab





df+B	claw lunge swipe
d+B	Low slash
db+B	Back leg sweep
b+B	Back round kick
ub/u/uf+B	Flip kick

Special moves:

QCF+P	Grabbing attack
QCF+K	Double axe kick
QCB+P	Power Punch
QCF+B	Pounce and Maim
QCB+B	Uppercut slash
Counter:	QCB+K

Alice:
Super fast with quick combos, Alice is easily one of the best characters in the game because of her agility.





Though not as powerful as Gado, her high combo abilities more than make up for it.

Moves:

P	High punch
f+P	Strong mid punch
df+P	Mid punch
d+P	Low punch
db+P	Spinning leg punch
b+P	Evade & mid punch
ub/u/uf+P	Jumping attack
K	High kick
f+K	Forward flip kick
df+K	Shin kick
d+K	Low lick
db+K	Turning leg kick
b+K	Power round kick
ub/u/uf+K	Jumping rising kick

Beast mode:

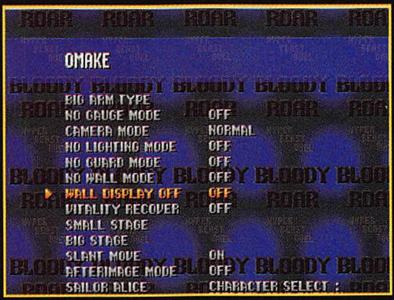
B	High punch
f+B	Jump kick
df+B	Low leg kick
d+B	Low punch
db+B	Turning low kick
b+B	Jump double kick
ub/u/uf+B	Forward flip kick

Special moves:

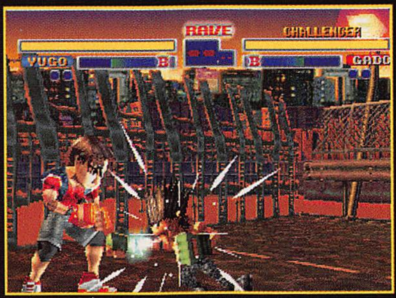
QCF+P	Rising spin punch
QCF+K	Handstand flip kick
QCB+K	Flip kick
QCF+B	Frankensteiner
QCB+B	Launching throw
Counter:	QCB+P

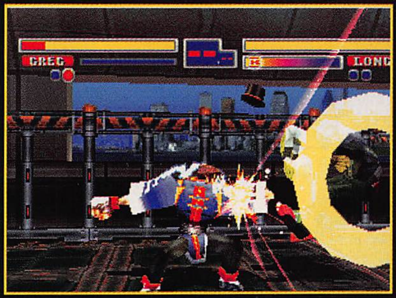
LOTS o' secrets:

Omake- Omake, or the extra options, can be activated after achieving certain goals in the game, which are:
Big Arm Type - Finish a game without continuing (press L2 + R2 when



selecting fighter)
No Gauge Mode - Finish a game with Yugo
Camera Mode - Finish a game with Alice
No Lighting mode - Finish a game with Long
No Guard Mode - Finish a game with Gado
No Wall Mode - Finish a game with Mitsuko
Wall Display Off - Finish a game with Fox
Vitality Recover - Finish a game with Bakuryu
Small stage - Finish a game with Greg





Big Stage - Enter Survival Mode and defeat 9 opponents
Slant Mode - Finish Time Attack mode under ten minutes (use the L1 & L2 buttons to move in real 3D)
Afterimage Mode - Finish game with all characters (default settings
Sailor Alice - Finish game with Alice on lvl 6 difficulty without continuing
Finally, you can have deformed characters by pressing L2 (for big heads) or R2 (for superdeformed size) when selecting your characters.
Look for next month's Hocus Pocus for the four remaining characters, secret characters, and a combo listing for all our bestial gladiators!!!






THE SMOKE CLEARS.
RUBBLE IS PUSHED ASIDE.
WHAT HAS HAPPENED?
MEMORIES BEGIN TO FOCUS...
...AH YES. THE BETA-TESTING OF THE NEW 33-BIT SYSTEM, "PLATYPUS 33".
BUT NO ONE SEEMED TO NOTICE THE TELL-TALE INSIGNIA ON THE SIDE.
START
B.M. INC.
IT SUDDENLY WENT WHITE LIGHT...
...THEN DARKNESS.
FOR HOW LONG, NOT ONE OF THEM IS QUITE SURE. BUT WHAT MONITAUR, POSTMEISTER, AND THE REST OF TEAM GAMEFAN DO KNOW IS...


...THEY'RE BACK...
...THEY'RE PISSED...
STP


ECM
...AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR SOME PAYBACK!
NEXT MONTH: THE RETURN OF "THE ADVENTURES OF MONITAUR"! SEE YA!
'98

DNN
DIEHARD NEWS NETWORK

Nintendo Gamer's Summit

GameFan recently had the chance to attend Nintendo's Gamer's Summit, and we got a sneak peak at all the latest and greatest N64 titles on offer. It was also a chance for the Big N to trumpet their remarkable sales figures and their apparent victory over Sony's PS during the holiday season (software-wise). We went, we saw, and we played till they pried us away with tears in our eyes; here's some of what we saw:

Nintendo 64 Player's Choice Series
Take a clutch of your best-selling titles, drop the price to under $40 a piece, bake for one hour and what do you have? Nintendo 64 Player's Choice Series of games. This collection of seven of Nintendo's best-sellers (each having sold over one million units each) should be in stores now. It's great news for people just getting into the 64-bit swing as it contains some pretty hot games: *Super Mario 64*, *Wave Race 64*, *Cruis'n USA* (OK, maybe not that one), *Star Wars: SOTE*, *Mario Kart 64* and *Star Fox 64* sans Rumble Pack. Acclaim's *Turok* also gets the low-price treatment.



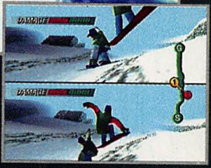
Yoshi's Story
Shigeru Miyamoto works his magic once again, taking Yoshi to the 64-bit zone. While we previewed this one extensively (in our January issue) and review it this issue, here's some more info: Apparently US gamers get an extra-special treat as NOA has seen fit to include a new ending for its American debut. By romping through the game and collecting certain lettered blocks, you can spell out a mystery word that will open up the new ending. Nintendo isn't saying what the word is (under threat of torture) but we're assured that's it worth the wait; we'll see.

1080 Snowboarding
It seems as if snowboarding has become a video game institution in its own right. First multiple titles on PlayStation and Saturn, and now Nintendo's take on the sport of teens everywhere. Developed by the same team responsible for *Wave Race*, expect to see lots of those good ol' real-time physics present that made *WR64* such a blast. The graphics are so real you can feel the shards of ice whipping against your skin as you barrel down the slopes faster than a speeding bullet; now that's brisk. All the fools will be hittin' the slopes come April 1.







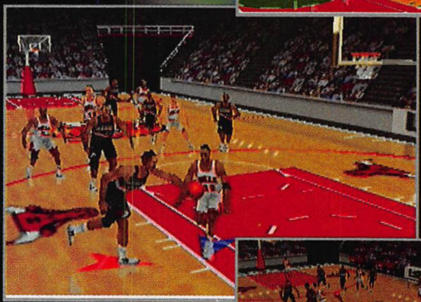






NBA Courtside
While Konami's *In the Zone* was the first off the bench, it's gonna take the first-party power of Nintendo to make it respectable. Super-smooth, motion captured, texture mapped players and arenas really give the impression of being there on the court - our resident sports guy couldn't tear himself away (we busted out the crowbar on this one). Combine the beautiful graphics with a stats-heavy model that does not in any way detract from gameplay and we just have the greatest basketball game ever. So stats-intensive that it requires a cartridge battery and a memory pack to keep track of it all. This one has a few months to go in development so hopefully things will come together in time for its April 27 release.













Major League Baseball Featuring Ken Griffey, Jr.

Delayed, delayed, and delayed again but it's still coming believe it or not. Produced by world-renowned Angel Studios (of Peter Gabriel videos and *The Lawnmower Man* fame) this is the first of their N64-produced titles, and they are confident that it will be the best one ever; we'll see. As per usual, it features motion captured players going through all their motions and fully 3D rendered stadiums with enough camera angles to make even the most jaded sports gamer happy. The graphics are definitely of a higher caliber than we're used to and that can only be a good thing. Looks like the boys of summer are gonna be playing in a whole new ballpark come May 25.





Cruis'n World

OK, so most of the world considered *Cruis'n USA* to be a slightly below average video game (Ed's note: that's putting it mildly) but all may be forgiven when the eager masses get their hands on the sequel, *Cruis'n World.* While the previous version had some, how shall we say, issues, most of them looked to be fixed in the early going. If your lookin' for an arcade-exact rendition of this recent hit then look no further; it's all here and then some. Featuring 14 new tracks and a collection of new vehicles as well as 4-player and Rumble Pack support, this game might actually get some respect and make up for the less than critically appraised prequel (Ed's Note: quite the gift for understatement this month, eh?).























Banjo-Kazooie

Outside of *Zelda: TOOT* and *F-Zero 64*, this is probably the single most anticipated N64 game at *GF*. Who wouldn't want more of that *Super Mario*-style gameplay? Actually, we were most surprised to find out that the game actually was not a total *Mario* rip-off, and amazingly, may turn out to be <gasp> a better game. What's so great about it? Um, just about everything: Tight control, beautiful graphics, and even good music are on call for this one. Rare has beyond-N64 super powers - I wonder what's in the water over at Rare HQ as every game just seems to get better and better. Banjo the bear and Kazooie the red crested breegull (?!) are set to hit cartridge slots everywhere on July 27 (pray for no delays).

In Other Nintendo Gamer's Summit News...

Zelda 64 was shown on video and here's a 100% *GF* guarantee-this game will redefine the action-RPG like *Mario 64* did for the platformer. The graphics and music alone make for an absolutely amazing time. And thankfully they did confirm that it was coming to the US this year, but no solid release date (I don't wanna wait till Christmas!). There were also a few words about the venerable SNES and the 'I can't believe this thing is outselling the N64 in Japan' Gameboy. The biggest news being that they both made Nintendo $1 billion dollars combined in '97- not bad. They also showed *Wario Land 2* for Gameboy tipping the scales at a hefty 8 megs making it the biggest GB game ever (may have to pick one of those up for that).

BURNING RANGERS



As you rescue survivors in the missions they appear on your 'rescue list' which can be accessed from the main title screen. Often they will send you an e-mail of thanks, which can be read once you have finished your game. Look for a couple of very familiar Sonic Team teenagers to make a surprise appearance...





Sonic Team are finally nearing completion of their latest (and potentially greatest) Saturn project - Burning Rangers. The version we played for this preview was around 80% complete, with all of the levels, characters, FMV (hand drawn anime) and game mechanics in place. There is still some work to

new e-mail

be done, but nothing drastic should change between this burn (pun intended) and the final. So, if you want to know more about the biggest Saturn game of '98, read on...

In case you've had your head in the sand for the past few months, Burning Rangers is a third person action/adventure that casts you as a member of an elite, futuristic search and rescue team which specializes in fire fighting. As with previous versions of the game you must choose between two playable characters (either Shou Amabane or Tillis) and then enter one of four huge 'missions' to put out fires and search for survivors. Four missions may not sound like a lot, but believe me, these babies are BIG! Not to mention dangerous! Not only do you have fires and unstable environments to contend with, but there are also a number of rogue security droids who have malfunctioned and are out to stop all intruders. The missions themselves are broken up into three segments: two main levels and a boss



fire limit

Another feature new to this version is the addition of a time limit (of sorts) in the form of a limit bar. When you start the level your fire limit is 0%, but as you explore the level and the fire spreads, the limit goes up - as indicated by the green/red bar in the top right hand corner of the screen. You can keep the limit down by extinguishing fires or rescuing survivors, but if the bar should fill completely with red, watch out! Fire will explode out of the ground and walls around you for a short period of time, and the level's fire limit will permanently go up by 10%. Should the limit reach 100%, fire will explode around you constantly!



grade a

Like NiGHTS, when you complete a level, your performance is tallied up in several categories and an overall grade is awarded. There's boss time, fire limit, crystals collected, and survivors rescued. So, like NiGHTS, you haven't really beaten a level until you get an A. Keep practicing!











R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

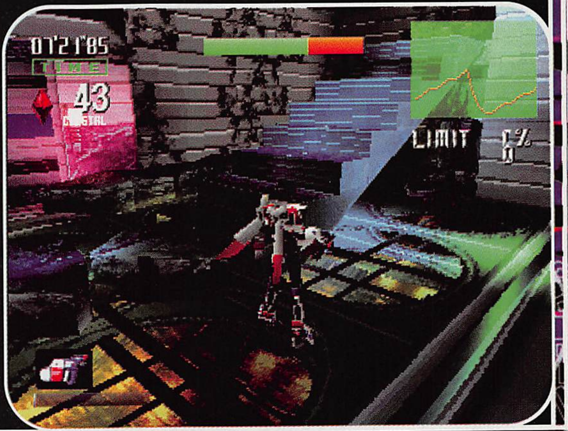
- DEVELOPER - SONIC TEAM
- PUBLISHER - SEGA
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS 1-2
- DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM
- AVAILABLE -



KNIGHTMARE
Well it's not Sonic, but I think I'll get over it...

stage. During all four missions your objectives remain the same: rescue all survivors, keep the fire under control, find the exit and stay alive! Both characters are equipped with a jet-powered body suit (that allows for super-jumps and short periods of flight) and a chargeable freeze gun that turns fire into collectable C02 crystals. These crystals can also be found lying around the levels, and are required to activate your mobile transporter unit which teleports survivors to safety (five crystals per survivor). Like Sonic's rings, crystals also act as your health. Get hit and you drop all your crystals. Get hit without a crystal and it's game over. Crystals are vital to both your success and survival, so be careful when using fully charged shots from your gun, as although it clears more fire, the blast also shatters any nearby crystals.

Perhaps the most noticeable improvement in this new version however, is the enhanced graphics engine. Since we last saw the game, Burning Rangers has been given a complete visual overhaul, and there is now a lot less polygon glitching than before. In my opinion, they still have a ways to go (i.e.. there is still too much glitching and slowdown), but I trust Sonic Team to have things buttoned up by the final. We'll be back with a full review next issue. K







Although they were removed from the title screen of our new version, previous versions of Burning Rangers included a two player Vs mode and an option to play the bonus game normally found at the end of mission 4. My guess is that they are now secrets which have to be earned! Even more replay incentive!



bonus games

THIRD ENEMY PLANT

"Fallen memory"







The first mission sends the Burning Rangers into a futuristic Energy Plant where a freak accident has unleashed a fire throughout the complex. The energy plant is built around a main central chamber that is several stories high, housing the plant's largest energy reactor. The first and second segments of the level are linked by an elevator, and once you move to the second segment there is no turning back.



Since this is the first level the going is pretty easy, with plenty of small fires to help keep the fire limit down and an abundance of crystals to make rescuing survivors a snap. Since the level design is relatively straight forward, this is the best place to come to terms with the control system, and a good training ground for learning to deal with some of Burning Rangers more common hazards. Be careful around toxic canisters (they go boom!) and learn to react to the sound of a backdraft building up (jump away!).



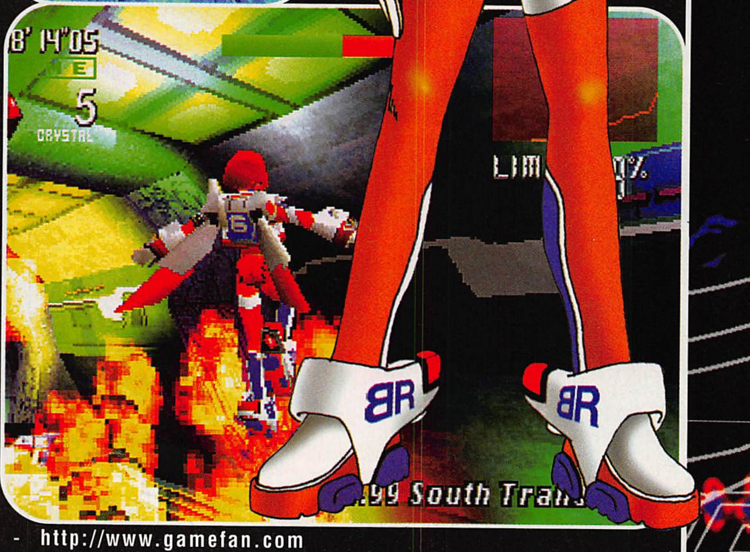
If you take a certain route you will also meet your first non-natural opponent: a big yellow robot. Don't worry, he's slow, stupid, and can only attack at close range. Several charged blasts should do the trick.











boss
Biomechanical Plant

The first mission boss is a giant robotic plant that has grown up through several floors of the energy plant. You face off against the bud, which spits corrosive blue acid clouds and streams of fire as it spins around. Aim charged blasts at the head and keep on your toes!





AQUASPOOL

"Silent















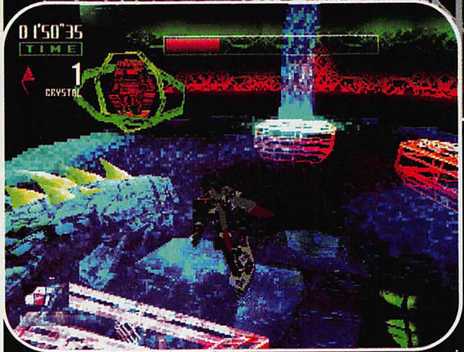
Who says fires only happen in dry places? Mission two is set in an undersea aquarium, complete with fish and dolphins! Put on your flippers people, we're going for a swim! Thankfully, the Burning Rangers jetsuit works just as well underwater as it does on dry land, so swimming isn't a problem. Strangely, despite the weight of all that equipment, your character rises to the surface very quickly when left alone, so use the attack button to propel yourself downwards.

During your travels you will encounter a dolphin trapped in a tank of water that is slowly getting hotter! Save him in the first segment and he will help you out when you reach an underwater maze in the second segment.

Mission two introduces yet another gameplay feature - the air vent. Keep an eye out for these, as they often lead to secret areas and bonus goodies. The first one is marked out by a shaft of light but the others are a little harder to spot. In Aquaspool you will encounter your second hostile robot - a blue mech who fires energy balls at you. Like the yellow mech in the first mission he moves slowly, and the energy balls are easy to dodge. You will also encounter a certain type of green chemical fire that spits streams of corrosive acid at you. The streams have a nasty habit of homing in on your location, so put out the fires as soon as you see them.



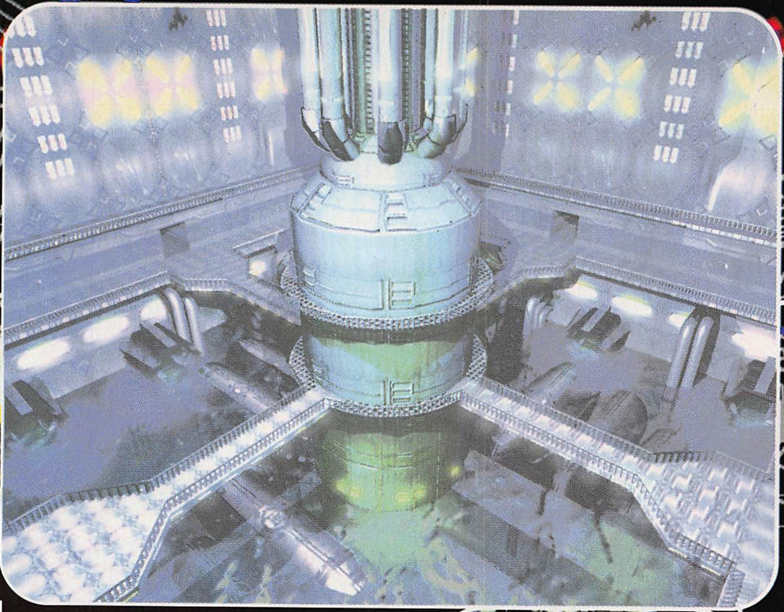
boss
Biomechanical Fish



Reminiscent of Gulpo in NiGHTS, this giant robotic fish swims around you in circles, firing all kinds of nasty projectiles in your direction. Use the red floating platforms to stay out of his reach, and pick your shots. He is easier to hit if you go underwater, but that also puts you right in the line of fire, so make sure you know what you're doing.

ABANDONED COLONY

"Gravity Zero"







The Abandoned Colony is a space station that has lost its orbit due to the fire and is drifting out into space. As you run down certain corridors, chunks of the outer hull crumble away sucking whatever is nearby into space! An emergency lock down system shuts off these breaches almost immediately, but you still don't want to be nearby when it happens!



As the level's title suggests, Mission Three contains quite a few areas where the gravity has failed, resulting in an effect very similar to being underwater. However, there is debris floating around that must be avoided, and the control is a little bit more awkward.



Mission Three contains some of the fiercest security droids yet, including a number of flying wasp robots and a couple of giant mechs on tracks armed with two huge spinning fans! There is also a minor puzzle element involving a number of switches that require security passes to activate, though it's hardly mensa stuff.



Near the end of the level you will be called upon to rescue a child by hand (your transporter fails). Whilst carrying the child you cannot fire or double jump, making negotiating the flaming inferno all the trickier.











boss
Assembling Mech

This boss encounter takes place in a huge cylindrical tube, with the boss mech rotating around it as he attacks. Shoot the boss with a charged shot and a chunk of him blows off! However, don't stand around admiring your handiwork for too long; because if left alone the boss will re-attach the limb and recover the damage you have caused! Keep firing and pushing the robot back to reduce him to scrap metal!

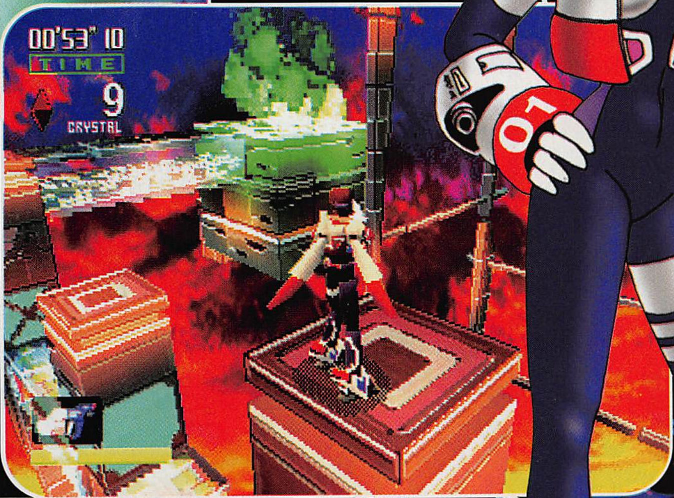




FINAL MISSION

“Winged Cr[illegible]le”





As you would expect, the final mission is both the largest and the most difficult of all. While all the previous missions have been excursions through man made environments, here you will explore a barren and alien cave network filled with all kinds of new dangers and enemies. Chemical fires rage, and the terrain is particularly treacherous - you never know if that next platform is going to be safe. There are several paths to explore, all of them converging in a long underwater tunnel which leads up to the planet surface. Get there in one piece and you will be forced to negotiate an infuriatingly tricky, towering maze of interlocking girders leading to the mission boss.

By this point, Sonic Team have gotten pretty darn evil with their backdraft placement and you really have to keep on your toes to avoid getting scorched. Fire explodes from all directions just when you least expect it and there are even a number of ‘mid bosses’ to deal with.

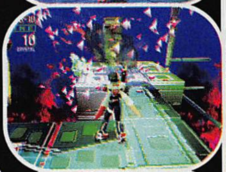
The Final Mission is unique in that it contains more than three level segments. Defeat the Giant Crystal and you will get the chance to play an awesome little Stun Runner style bonus game where you fly your Burning Ranger space sled into the final boss area. Once there, expect the unexpected! And no, I'm not going to elaborate on that...















boss
Giant Crystal





High atop the metal girders you will face off against a giant pulsating crystal. Hop between the four platforms to dodge the incoming attacks and keep firing - the crystal will soon be destroyed. But is that it? Is your quest finally over? I don't think so...

• Shining Force 3 •

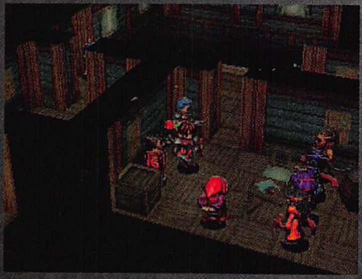
SEGA · RPG · MAY





Role Playing fans rejoice! Just in time to wrench some of the nails, out of the Saturn's coffin, is *Shining Force 3*. Already out, in Japan, the 32-bit fantasy will be hitting our shores, shortly. I, in fact, am already playing it... jealous? Continuing the high level of quality that the series has worn like a badge of honor, *Shining Force 3* delivers all of the goods that the franchise's legions of fans have come to expect. This time out, you must save the kidnapped king. Joining you is a huge supporting cast of characters, ranging from centaurian knights to dwarven barbarians; all of your favorite creatures and classes return to help you do battle with the evil minions of your ultimate enemy. One thing that has changed, is the graphics. All of the battle sequences have made the jump from sprite to polygon. For die hard fans, for whom this franchise is a religion, this may come as an unwanted change in the recipe. But consider the gorgeous hand-animated, full-motion models of the characters, real-time texture-mapped polygons, and a faster frame rate combined with turn-based battle sequences, branching storylines, and multiple hidden characters for 50 hours of play... sounds real nice to me. Look for a full review next time around.







• House of the Dead •

SEGA · GUN GAME · MAY.



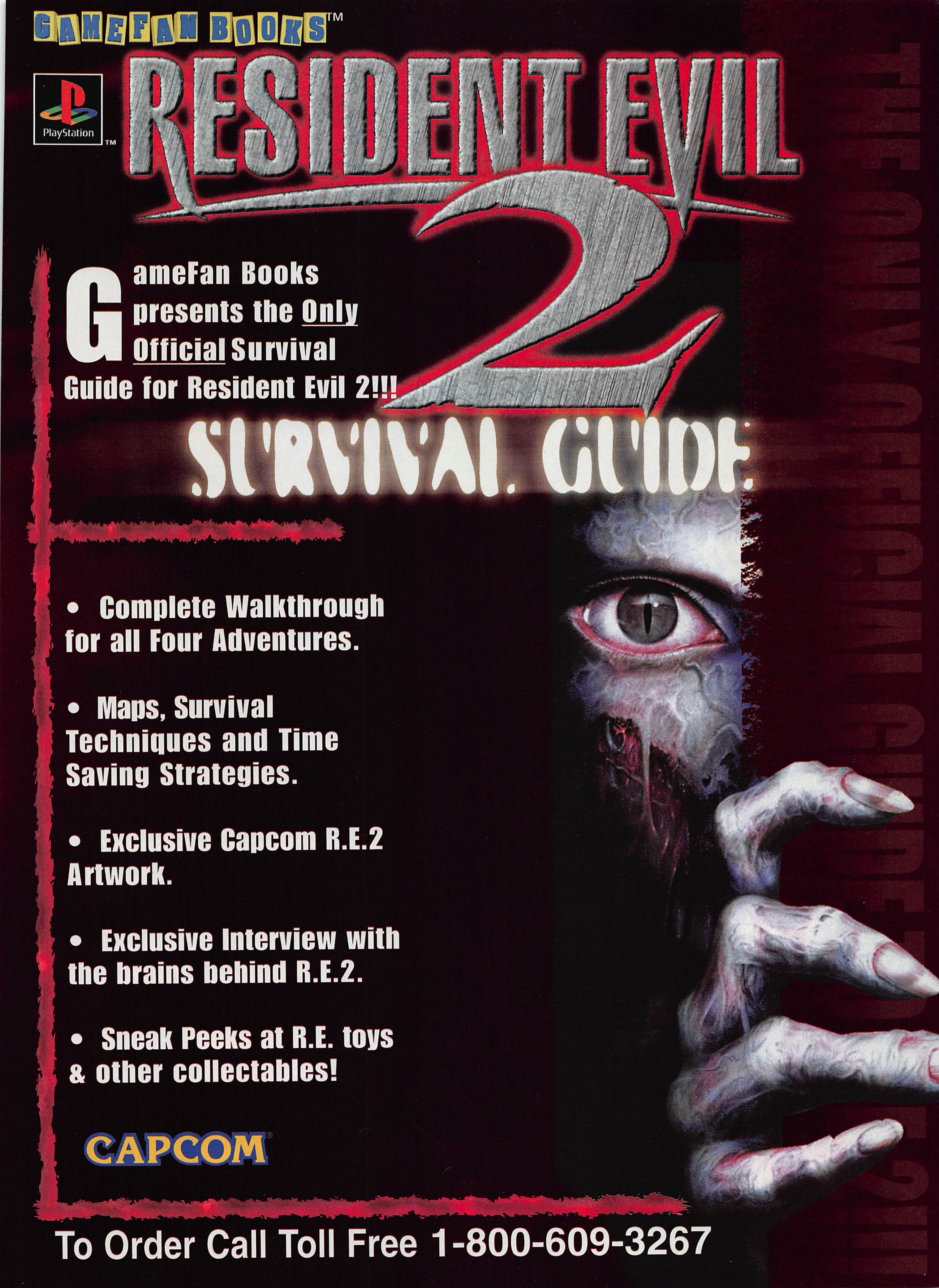


With a heavy assortment of light gun arcade games blasting away to the top of the arcades, SEGA's *House of the Dead* not only shines the radiance of SEGA's arcade division, but also puts some light at the end of the tunnel on what's to come out next for the Saturn. Porting *House of the Dead* from the arcade to the Sega Saturn is a hefty task , but one that has already begun. Judging from the early screenshots (about 20-30% done) compared to the arcade board, Sega has quite a heavy workload to finish. But if one is to reflect on the arcade conversion of *Virtual Cop 2* to the Saturn (phenomenal), there is a large amount of hope that *House of the Dead* will look quite lively to it's arcade sister. As far as new features, the only reported rumored feature are separate story lines for Player 1 and Player 2, though a Time Attack mode is supposedly in the works. Oh, and don't worry about the bloody gore and decayed animated limbs, it's all in there. For those that haven't visited their local arcade in eons, *House of the Dead* is SEGA's newest shooting spree. This time around, your targets are monsters and undead creatures spawned from ideas from H.P. Lovecraft to *Night of the Living Dead*. Furiously frantic and befittingly bloody, Saturn owners should be able to enjoy evil exorcism enlightenment hopefully mid-quarter of this year.

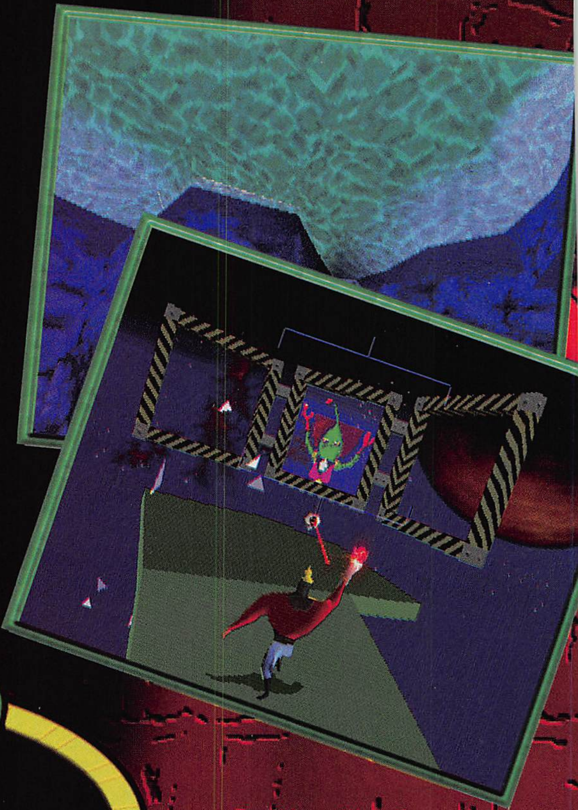







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BLASTO

Da Da Duh Da Da Da Da Duh. Forgive my imitation fanfare. I'm just trying to get you in the mood for *Blasto*, Sony's latest installment of 3D platform madness. The theme of *Blasto* is a throwback to the Alien Invasion/Flash Gordon era. Arcade games like *Space Ace* and the Pinball game *Attack from Mars* epitomize what I'm talking about.

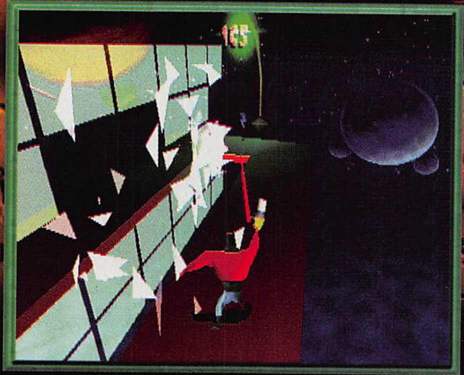
So how do you develop the atmosphere of a game like this? Well, you can start with your mission. To be honest, you don't really have one. I'm sure there's some general "Save the Earth because you're the only macho hero around" deal, but *Blasto* isn't bogged down by story. Instead, you're thrown into the action from the start, and there are no breaks to interrupt the mood.

The game streams all the time, so you don't grow old with loading time. In fact, every level leads straight into the next with no loading. That's right! No loading to be seen.

Back to setting the mood for the game, the programmers have added a lot of little touches which can easily be missed if you aren't paying attention. All the strange UFO/alien noises you'd come to expect are here, and they're done quite well. Your character, Blasto, also makes snide remarks every so often after a satisfying shot or after rescuing a Blasto Babe.

"Did somebody say Babe???" That's right. What Alien Invasion game would be complete without having to rescue a bunch of Blasto Babes? Yup, no boring coins to be found in this game. And get this... every Babe you rescue is different. Their appearance and animation of loving thanks to the Hero are all unique. The Babes are supposed to get more risque as the game progresses as well. To top it all off, yes, you do get something special for rescuing all the Babes in the game. Sony will just leave that to your imagination till somebody does it though.







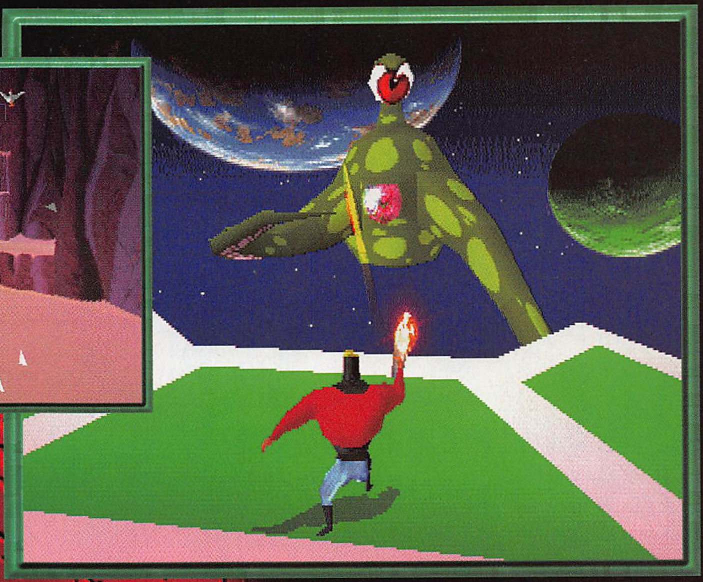
P PREVIEW	PlayStation	DEVELOPER - SONY	# OF PLAYERS - 1
		PUBLISHER - SONY	DIFFICULTY - UNKNOWN
		FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - April



"Blasto Babes... kick ass!"





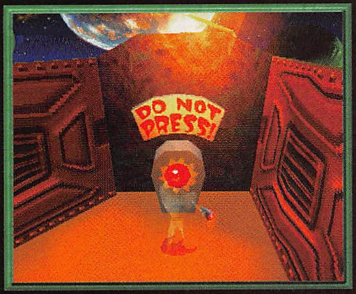


Rescuing all the Babes in this game will be no simple feat, because *Blasto* has some of the most difficult-to-find secrets I've seen in a long time. There's power-ups and hidden Babes which can be found through: Leaps of Faith, invisible platforms, and performing certain actions to trigger an event. Say you find a teleporter to the next level. Just jump right in and be on your way, right? Wrong! Hang around and explore, and you just might find a secret or two.

Ok, ok. Secrets, sounds, and babes are all fine and dandy... but how does it play? Well, it's a 3D Platformer. You've got a gun, and there's aliens. That's all you need to know. Your character has a variety of moves to choose from including: strafing, hanging/climbing, a backflip, and a walk. There's nothing revolutionary about the gameplay, but at the same time, there's nothing wrong with it.

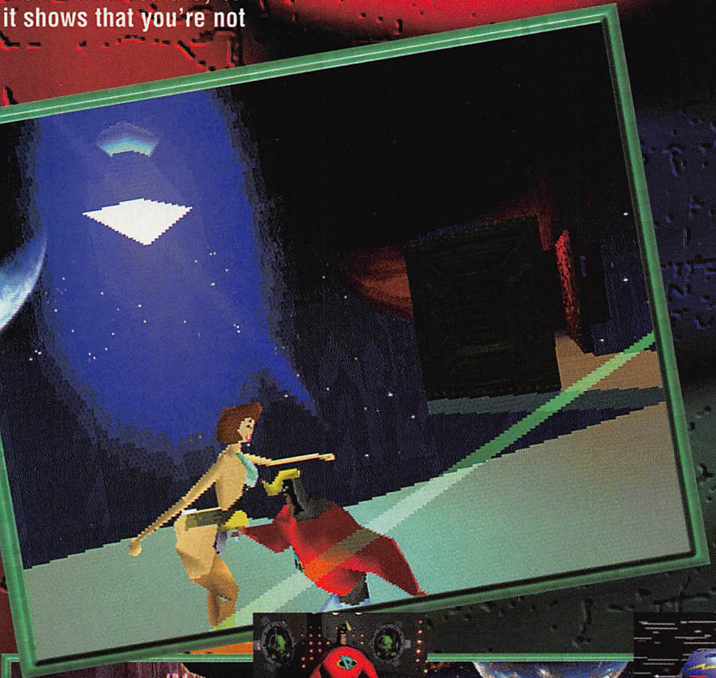
Blasto takes full advantage of the PlayStation's abilities. There's lightsourcing on the lasers. The characters are completely gourad shaded to show depth. And the experience is made complete with 3D explorable backgrounds. Also, you can position your camera from different angles. It may not be the most useful feature, but it shows that you're not walking around on a 2D painting.





You start the game with a standard laser which you can power up by holding down the "Square" button. The powered up shot is lethal enough to blow off aliens' heads in one shot, usually accompanied by color commentary from Blasto himself. A new feature which the game offers is the ability to move your camera around while still aiming your main weapon. There's also secondary weapons to pick up which have dual features: you can fire either straight ahead or lob a shot through the air.

No platformer would be complete without accessories you can interact with, and Blasto delivers here as well. So far, we've seen a jet pack which you can power up. This really allows you to explore the 3D environs and search for more Blasto Babes. You can also ride a blue chicken, but where it takes you... I haven't the foggiest. "It's the chicken, right? Babes dig the chicken."











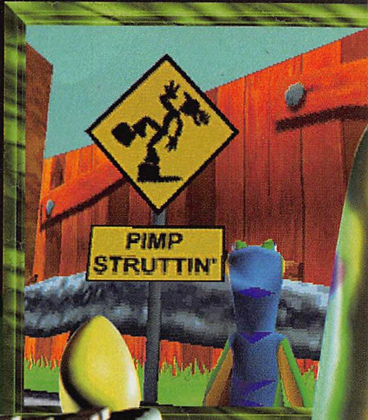


















GEX
ENTER THE GECKO

"Listen to my voice... Keep your eyes on the watch... Listen to my voice... You are getting sleepy... deep sleep... You will listen to every word I say and believe it whole-heartedly. The PlayStation cannot do a game in true 3D. You will never be able to explore a 3D world of colorful backgrounds with a polygon character on this platform. All the PlayStation is capable of is a game with polygon characters 'walking on a picture' where you're stuck on a linear track. You'll never be able to view a 3D world on the PlayStation through the lens of a 360 degree, rotating camera with a Zoom-in feature..."

Psst! This is the voice of reason. Don't believe the hype. Everything you've been told the PlayStation CAN'T do, it has already done. Can't do a game like Mario 64? Allow me to introduce you to my friend Gex. He's certainly come a long way since his 2D origin. They should have named this game *Gex 2: Evolution of a Gecko*, because the programmers have given ol' Gex a major makeover.

Your journey begins in a courtyard with your choice of paths leading to either of two worlds: FineTooning (Cartoon Land) or SmellRaiser (Haunted Mansion). Once you've completed both of those worlds, you're able to fight your first boss in Gilligex Isle. After that, you'll have more worlds to choose from: Pangaea 90210, Frankensteinfeld, www.dotcom.com, Aztec 2 Step (a bonus level), Mooshoo Pork

The old features you loved about Gex have been kept in the second installment: his random, funny comments and the distinct theme worlds. What's been added? The 3D engine and more smaller, zany touches which add to the game's originality. For example, in the level Fine Tooning, there's a "Hard Hat Area" where objects continually rain down on you. Instead of dropping generic boulders, you'll see items ranging from a fat lady to the kitchen sink falling on top













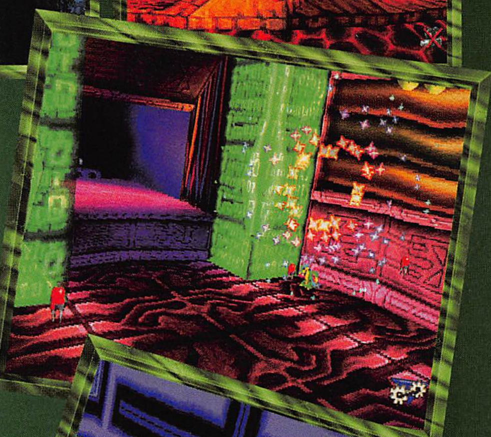


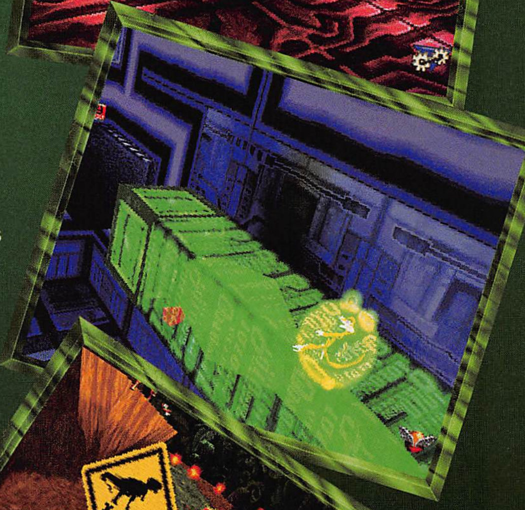


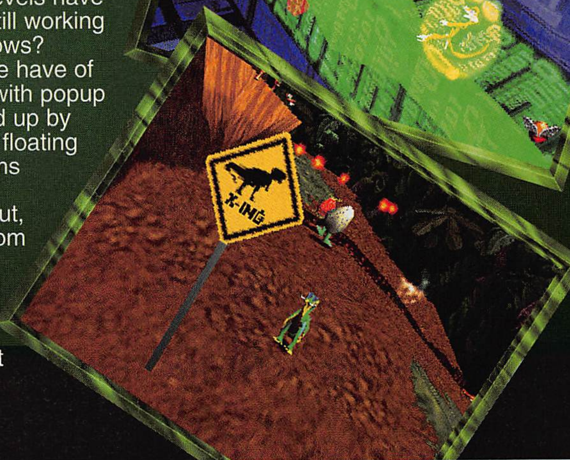












of you. Also in the same evel, you'll jump into a hole which has a sign next to it proclaiming "Wabbit Season." Once inside, Gex wears a pink rabbit suit (with his green tail still sticking out), and you're hunted by Elmer Fudd look-a-likes. In the SmellRaiser level, you'll come across a zombie whom you'll knock body parts off of with every hit... till he's hopping on one leg a la the knight in Monty Python's Holy Grail ("Tis but a flesh wound...")



Another nice touch is the variety in idle animation (if you leave the controller alone), some of which are unique for each level. For example, in the haunted mansion levels, Gex will turn his head in a full circle like The Exorcist. In the ToonLand level, he scratches/picks his ear with his tail if left unattended. All the animation is smooth and the game moves at 30 frames per second for the most part with occasional lapses.

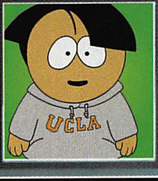
Gex's sense of humor should have something for everybody. He'll say things such as "He's dead, Jim" "I'm goin' to marry her, Dad" "Go Speed Racer, Go!" and "Cut... cue stunt gecko" (when he gets hit). The voices he uses range from Austin Powers to a mobster to plain ol' Gex. And yes, he sings also. He jumps, he sings, he does backflips on the fly, can scale walls, etc. What can't Gex do?

A less noticeable aspect of the game are the sound effects, which are great. My favorite being the Bionic Man sound effect when Gex performs an incredibly high leap (in the www.dotcom.com level); that one draws people into the room every time I do it. The music, on the other hand, is mediocre to uninspired at best, in this version. Maybe the later levels have better tunes or they're still working on this aspect. Who knows?

Well, the current copy we have of *Gex 2* still has some issues with popup which, hopefully, will be cleaned up by the final version. Also, the free floating camera sometimes has problems sticking with a view that's user friendly or easy on the eyes. But, you are able to rotate it and zoom in and out at your leisure. It's still too early to pass judgement on some of the problems of *Gex 2*, but from what we've seen so far, it looks like it will Blast the competition away.

PREVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CRYSTAL DYNAMICS	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - MIDWAY	DIFFICULTY - N/A
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - FEBRUARY



EGGO
"Gecko... Plumber... Gecko... Plumber... I'll take the Gecko."

SKULLMONKEYS



REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - The Neverhood

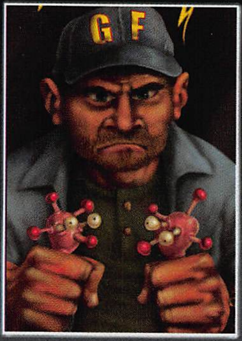
PUBLISHER - Dreamworks/EA

FORMAT - CD

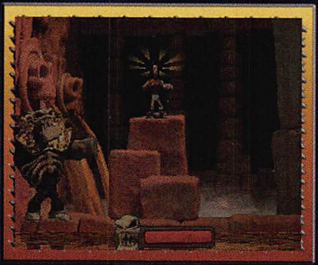
OF PLAYERS - 1

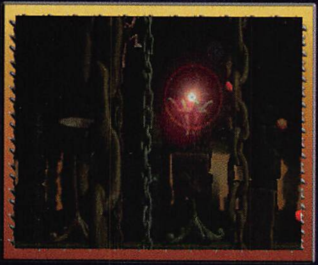
DIFFICULTY - Hard

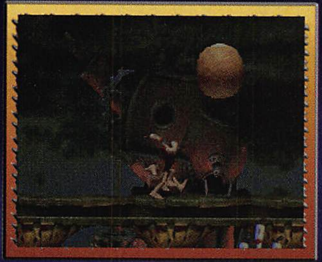
AVAILABLE - 4th Quarter



ECM
Who are the people in your Neverhood?









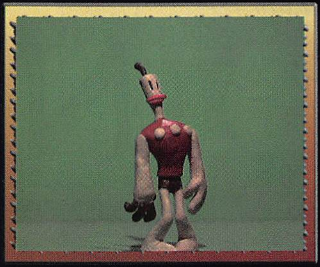
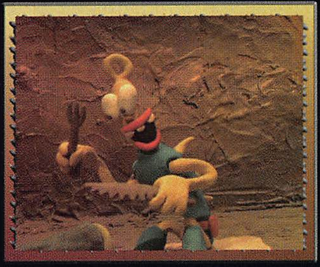
Alas, it seems as though the world is apparently uncaring of the plight of the once proud and majestic platform game, leaving the Neverhood's *Skull Monkeys* to hit the street with a resounding 'thud.' It seems that most people out there just don't care one bit about the demise of this once great genre; the former king of video games. Well, I'm on a one-man crusade to see that it changes for the better, and there's no more worthy place to start than right here.

You take control of the wacky and whimsical Klayman, a fellow that —judging from the intro—was, uh, 'drafted' into helping stop the evil Klogg and his unwitting army of Skull Monkeys from building the Evil Engine #9 (think big and mean, in a gnashing teeth o' death sort of way). Their goal? Conquering (read, destroying) the Neverhood; which, incidentally, is where Klayman makes his home. After being unceremoniously dumped on the Skull Monkeys world he's off on the platform romp of a lifetime.

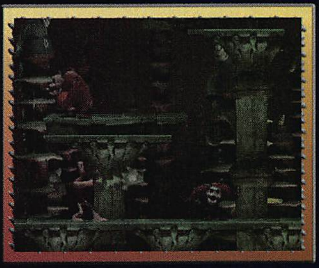
So what exactly is it that makes this game so bleedin' hot? Well, there really isn't any one thing that makes it gushingly great—everything about it is amazing. The game starts out nice and easy, letting you get the basics of platforming down (in case you may have forgotten): jumping, collecting stuff, discovering secrets and so on. This also explains my early dismissal of the game, seeing as how it's something I had done countless times before. But after the initial set of levels it becomes a platforming paradise, unlike any before it on 32-bit. Tons of levels (at least 100 and counting), super-precise jumping action, and loads of jumping happiness!

Playability is second to none in this nirvana of platforming delights. Let's just say that the basic jumping and head-bopping are supreme, but barely nick the surface of this phenomenal game. The control is so tight and intuitive that executing multiple nail-biting jumps from falling platforms and bounding across the skulls of unwitting enemies becomes second nature. And take my word that you'll need unerring accuracy later in the game, as it can get quite unforgiving



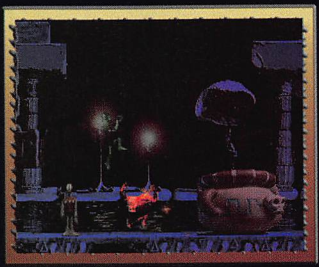
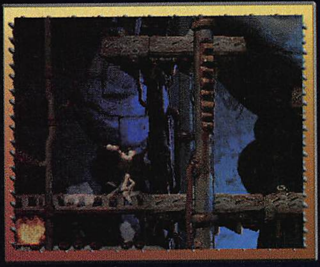
towards the end in a rip-out-your-hair kind of way. Oh, and just so we're clear, the mechanics are nothing new and revolutionary—just incredibly solid gameplay of the 'old school' ***DKC*** and ***Sonic*** sort. One additional note: This game was MUCH harder in our earlier rev, but for some reason the Neverhood decided to make a few changes that makes the game much more accessible to the average gamer; good or bad? You decide.

A large portion (on the N. Rox %-O-meter it equals about 30) of what makes this game so amazing are the graphics and music. Klayman, and all his foes are modeled and animated through traditional claymation. Everything, from the lowliest Skull Monkey to the largest boss, is animated to utter perfection. A wonderful color palette and a heaping helping of beautiful parallax are a sight for sore eyes accustomed to looking at the latest shambling polygonal monstrosities month in, month out. In fact, the whole game looks like it sprang from the deranged mind of Tim Burton while watching an episode or two of *Duckman*—two great sources, of, err, inspiration. And for those that simply must have some nextgen magic, there are a few nice lighting effects, lens flares, and one polygonal level in which you pilot a sub from a top down perspective—but that's it as far as 'special' effects go. The music deserves an award as it's some of the most original, and intensely funny stuff going. It fits the game like a glove, and the bonus round tune will have you rolling on the floor laughing.



Speaking of gut-wrenching laughter, that's a big part of what makes this game so damn fun. Every so often you'll complete a set of levels and are rewarded with a claymation sequence in the style of the old Warner Bros. cartoons. Featuring Klaymen in a bizarre set of shorts, doing everything from eating lots and lots of beans (use your imagination) to a battle with a wolf down a rabbit hole. Hell, the game is worth playing through if only for these sequences—they're that good. Which gives the impression that Klayman would be perfect for his own claymation TV show or movie (move over Wallace and Grommit). On top of that there are a ton of funny little touches as you travel through the game, from the Skull Monkeys that throw themselves up (vomit, that is) to the boss battle with 'Joe Head Joe'—don't ask, just play it.

Alas, I am rapidly running out of space (I'd ramble to Hambleton-esque lengths if they'd let me, <sigh>) so I have to tie this up. You must buy this game, let nothing stay you from that righteous path. I'm counting on the readers of ***GameFan*** to make this one a monstrous hit, as you're the only ones with any intelligence and taste (unless of course you bought any of the following titles: *Need for Speed*, *War Gods*, or *Rise of the Robots*—then you should be put away for a good long time). After ya get done with this one get ready for *Tomba* and *Klonoa*—platformers are back, one way or another!—ECM

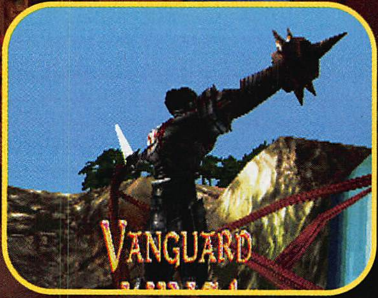


CARDINAL SYN





Kronos, a name synonymous with sub-par fighting titles, is throwing their worn hat into the ring once again. This time out, the opus is *Cardinal Syn*, a 3-D *Weaponlord* clone that has potential. The key phrase here is "has potential." While *Cardinal Syn* features some atmospheric backgrounds, spiffy graphics and clever gaming additions, it still fumbles for a solid fighting engine. Granted, this game isn't done yet, but time is running out and much needs to be done in order to keep this title from ending up in the compost heap, along with *Criticom* and *Dark Rift*.



As I mentioned previously, expect the fighting style (as well as character design) to resemble that found in *Weaponlord*, the extremely underrated fighter, for the SNES and Genesis. While you shouldn't expect weapon breaks or juggling death combos, spewing innards all over the screen, the concept is the same: find the quickest, most fluid ways to swing that blade and slice up your opponent like a Christmas ham.

Cardinal Syn features 3-D arenas that you can roam freely in. Pick up chests that contain potions and other power-ups to give yourself an added edge... While you won't utilize this option much, it will help you greatly when battling the boss, Syn.



Those of you out there that get off on blood-letting will find *Cardinal Syn* a special treat. The red stuff spurts all over the place, staining the floor and peppering the air. The intro scenes are quite disturbing, as well. One scene has the crazed cyclops, Mongoro, snapping a man in half and then eating him... very Conan-esque.

Taking a page from *Tekken*'s book, *Syn* will have the fighting modes: Team Battle, Training, and Survival, along with the standard compliment of Tournament and VS. There are eight combatants to start, but many shields remain unclaimed at the selection screen, so there could be as many as a dozen more...



From the looks of things, the combo system is limited, and there seems to be a lack of interesting throws and counters. I will admit, however, that after playing the game for a while, it does begin to grow on you. This is a signal that novice fighters will probably get a fair amount of visceral pleasure from *Cardinal Syn*. I also know that it still isn't enough to make it worth while for seasoned vets.





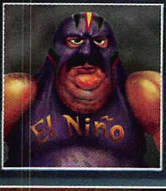




P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER -KRONOS	# OF PLAYERS 1-2
PUBLISHER - SCEA	DIFFICULTY -ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



EL NINO: NOTHING LIKE A GOOD BLOOD LET-TING TO CURE A HEADACHE







CRIME KILLER











This game is still in development, but our latest copy of *Crime Killers* features that third vehicle which Pixelogic was planning on adding: the Police gunship (a plane/copter-like vehicle). Still moving at the impressive speed of 60 frames per second, the game plays like a non-stop action "seek and destroy" mission.

You play the role of a futuristic police officer, punishing people for the slightest crime. When you come upon an offender, you'll see a brief description of their infraction which can range from curb crawling to illegal parking to arms smuggling. And their punishment for parking in a "No Parking" zone? All the offenses in the future result in the same sentence: death. It's your job to track down and purge the city of all offenders.

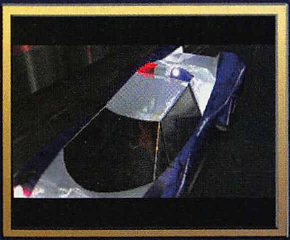
Your vehicle comes equipped with the standard Police siren, machine guns, and a nasty Tazer of Justice. You can also pick up other weapons and ammunition power ups along the way. Vehicle selection so far ranges from the smaller motorbike to the midsized, sporty "chick magnet" to the gunship (when traffic becomes too much of a hassle). So far, there are about 8 missions to choose from, some requiring a different vehicle than the rest.

Crime Killers moves at a blistering (and I do mean blistering) speed of 60fps, and the action is so fast and chaotic that I found myself getting that "*Doom* headache" since I'm constantly taking turns at light speed in my pursuit of the next notch on my belt. The game uses the PlayStation's abilities well combining polygon vehicles with subtle use of lightsourcing and you guessed it, lens flare.

There's also a two player mode which I'll assume is a deathmatch (in our version, you can't kill the other player). It's done in a split-screen view (so you can sneak a peek at the other screen for some sophisticated reconnaissance), and so far you can only use the cars in the two-player mode. The usual weapon and ammo powerups are still present in this mode, and there are more items unique to multi-player, which we couldn't figure out a use for yet. Also, the radar shows which portion of the city you're in, and you can spot your human opponent with it as well. No "camping" around a corner for your friend to come driving by. He can see you waiting and come around from the other side, or fly in all guns blazing.







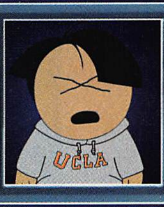


UPDATE

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - PIXELOGIC
PUBLISHER - INTERPLAY
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - N / A
AVAILABLE - SPRING



EGGO
To protect and swerve.









DIABLO

Climax has ported over to the PlayStation the PC bestseller, *Diablo*, originally produced by Blizzard, famous for developing *Warcraft II*. As far as conversions go, the programmers did a fine job of translating the complex controls of *Diablo* into an easy-to-use control system for PlayStation users. At first, you may be overwhelmed by all the features; everything from selecting items to equip on your belt and body and choosing which spell to ready from your five-page spellbook, to monitoring your health and mana meters and the variety of armor and weapons that you encounter and carry throughout your quests. But once you become familiar with the convenient menus and options, you'll be switching spells in the heat of battle without flinching or fumbling at all.

Your *Diablo* experience begins with a shocking CG intro of you exploring a deserted town. Crows are feasting on fresh corpses, and you're here to find out why. The first locale you'll explore is the town, where you'll meet quite a cast of characters including the town witch, a barmaid, the village elder, and even a drunkard. Each character can be found in the same spot every time you visit town, and you'll be returning to them for information or buying/selling items later in the game. If you're playing the single player mode, the characters in town will give you quests to complete such as hunting down "The Butcher," a hulking, axe-wielding mass of muscle who was personally responsible for retiring Griswold from adventuring to the peaceful life as the town's blacksmith.





There are three different character classes to choose from along the way: Warrior, Rogue, or Sorcerer. The class you choose in the beginning will determine what types of weapons and statistics you will be acquiring later. Sorcerers will have the heavier emphasis on spells than hand-to-hand combat, while a Warrior will be the opposite. The magic spells in the game are either cast from items such as scrolls/staves or recited by yourself from a spellbook. Spells from the spellbook must be learned along the way, and they require mana to cast.

The copy we have of the game is only 70% complete, but it looks like



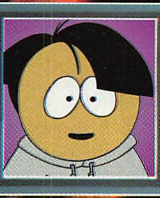






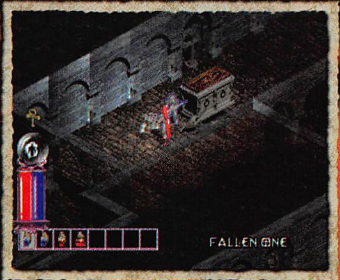
P PREVIEW — PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CLIMAX	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - EA	DIFFICULTY - N/A
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - SPRING



EGGO
"Oh, my god! They've killed Diablo! You bastards!"













all the music, voices, sounds, and monsters have been faithfully translated from the PC version of the game. The programmers took advantage of the PlayStation's capabilities by adding a few new touches to the game such as lightsourcing auras around the lightning spells. Tinier details have also been added such as your character's reflection in the stream in town. You can also visit town "at night" complete with fireflies in the trees. Don't worry, all the characters will be hanging out in their usual hangouts in the dark.





Loading time is not a problem for this game. The only times the game loads are when it first creates a randomly-generated dungeon level or when you bring up your character's item inventory screen. I did notice some minor slowdown when using the two-player mode, but when we brought up the auto-map with two characters onscreen, it felt like we were tracking through molasses. Hopefully, the programmers at Climax will be able to fix this slowdown in the final version.

What has me worried about *Diablo* for the Playstation is that I believe Blizzard originally intended for the game to be a multi-player game. The main aspect which brought replay value to the game was the finding of better items/equipment and interaction with other players. Now the PlayStation version has a multi-player mode which features both characters on the same big, single screen a la *Gauntlet*. The only drawback to the multiplayer PlayStation mode is that both players must be present at every sitting whenever you load up the game. Meaning, you can't use your multiplayer character alone when your friend is not there. On the other hand, if you have a regular person with whom you play frequently, you will be able to get the most out of this game.

Playing *Diablo* as a single-player game gets old fast because once you've beaten Diablo, you'll just find yourself killing the same old monsters over and over again. The fun comes in scouring dungeons for better equipment (especially amulets and rings) to make your character more powerful. To fully enjoy this "treasure hunt," you need another person to compete with, or else you'll soon become bored and your CD will be sentenced to a lifetime of "collecting dust on the gaming shelf." ***ECM***

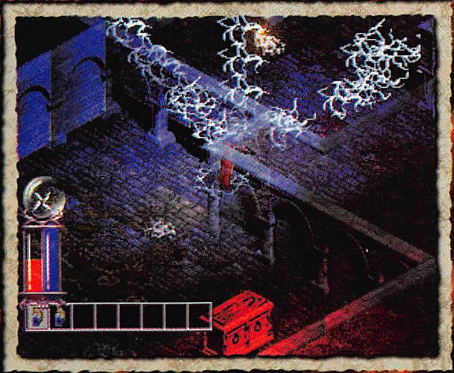


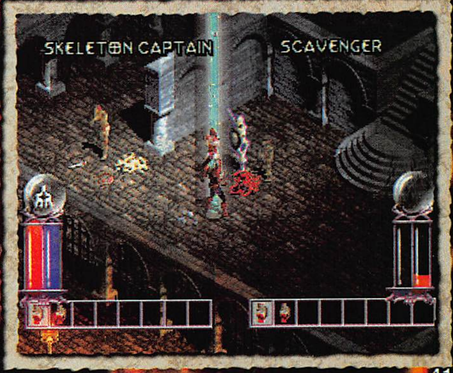












TEKKEN 3







The information on the bone-splintering fist-fest is still slow in coming, but the fervorous anticipation continues to grow in this absence of stimulation. The reason for all the interest, and secrecy, is the forecoming release of a pre-determined mega-hit. Concerns about the faithfulness of this conversion are in the forefront on many fighting-gamers minds as "T" day approaches. For the first time in many years, there are those who quietly question the never-fail ability of Namco to do another almighty "conversion" that will stomp on its arcade predecessor from a haughty height. The rumor of the need for an add-on accessory have all but been completely forgotten; the programming fiends locked away in the computer-lined Namco of Japan basements will accomplish their usual miracles with the PlayStation as it stands.

For those who like to live their lives under large rocks, and consequently have no idea what all this gibberish I'm spewing is in reference to, let me illuminate your depraved minds with a couple of cocked iron fists. *Tekken 3* is the latest version of an enormously popular fighting game series that has made its home in thousands of arcades and millions (literally) of PlayStations. The spectacular techniques used by the motley crew that fight in the Tekken tournament could rend any mortal man into a high-priced piece of abstract art in seconds, and each will do its devastating dissertation in a style all his, her, or its own. The depth of this game can be questioned by *Virtua Fighter* purists (strategy-wise, not in number or variety of moves mind you), but for those who get their thrills out of tantalizing juggles, cartilage-blending holds, and techniques that look and sound as brutally lethal as any fighting game fan wants, this is the only game you'll need!

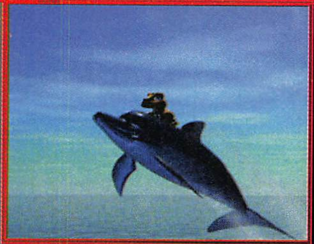
The most current information is that it will have all the modes from *Tekken 2* (Arcade, Team Battle, Survival, Time Attack, Practice, and Options) and possibly more. A secret character (most likely, the first of many) named Gon, who's based on a stocky, fire-belching dinosaur, has been spotted recently in newly released screenshots of the game. And, so far, the screenshots have yet to give evidence of anything but another perfect port from the wily wizards at Namco! Even elements of the arcade's 3-D backgrounds will make the treacherous trip into your home. This will be a no-brainer purchase for sure!











P PREVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - NAMCO	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - NAMCO	DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM/HARD
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - APRIL 20



P. RATT
"'sniff'...I'm still waiting for a Nezumi-based secret character"

Point Blank

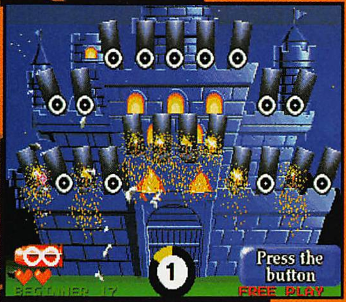
Who says PlayStation can't do 2D games? Namco's smash arcade hit comes to the PlayStation and not only is the translation perfect, but they've also thrown in more features to play with. *Point Blank*'s gorgeous 2D backgrounds are composed from a bright pallet of colors. Just take a close look at any of the screenshots, and you'll fall in love with this game.

I can't find a single flaw in any of the backgrounds in this game, and there are a LOT of backgrounds. There are easily over 60 different stages which play like mini-games requiring specific skills to pass. Sometimes, the speed of your trigger finger will be sorely tested, yet in the next stage, you'll be given one bullet and told to make it count.

Earlier I mentioned that Namco loaded this gem of a game up with features which weren't in the arcade. The programmers have included a new bunch of "Very Hard" scenarios which use some of the PlayStation's abilities such as lightsourcing (in a darkened warehouse) and a recklessly driving, polygonal car which you must perforate 50 times. The difficulty can be adjusted so novices and experts alike will be challenged.

And if you are having trouble with a specific type of stage (such as the single "skill" shot) you can practice nothing but those. You'll get an endless supply of one-shotters till you've perfected using your sight or choose to hang up your gun in disgust. There's also a 1 player Quest Mode.


















That's right, a shooting game RPG. You control Dr. Dan and Don and random encounters are like the arcade stages. The idea is a good one, but the difficulty of the random encounters is easy, and doesn't seem to be adjustable. This makes the random encounters more tedious than fun. Also, the story of Quest Mode is exciting enough to cure insomnia.

To truly experience *Point Blank*, though, you must play this game with two players. There's such a big difference between playing this alone and with a friend. When you're shooting alone, the only competition you have is with the clock. But when there's a human opponent sitting next to you stealing your targets, the pace of the game becomes much more feverish. And the more trigger happy you get, the more likely you are to plug an innocent civilian or a bomb.

Point Blank's graphics and gameplay are superb, but how are the sounds? Great of course. The sound effects are both cute and appropriate. Every stage comes complete with a different tune, though they all share that *Point Blank*-ish feel - catchy and amusing. The most important aspect of playing this game is - it's just plain fun. You can spend hours on this game until the sun rises and you won't even realize it. I just wish there were more 2D games as fun as *Point Blank* out there.





R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - NAMCO

PUBLISHER - NAMCO

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

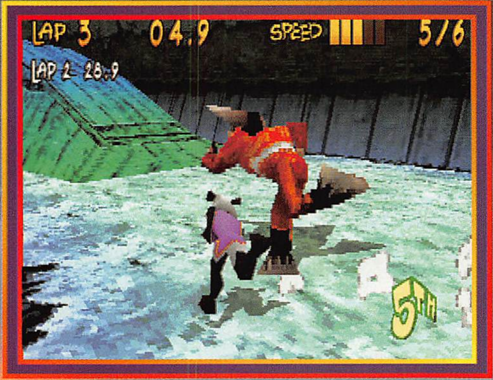
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - APRIL



EGGO
"The only thing missing? Scuzzlebutt."

RUNNING WILD



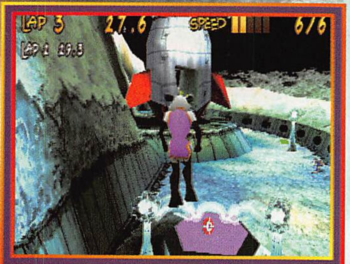
Much to my delight, a surprise visit was paid to the GameFan staff this month by the generous folks at Universal Interactive Studios. Yep, that's right, the talented folks that brought us *Crash Bandicoot*, so you know what they had to show us would likely be impressive, and it was. What did they show, you ask? A little title called *Running Wild* (formerly known as *Freakin' Fast*), and it's pretty wild.



The game stars a cast of wacky animals that race through varied courses. Before you go off shouting, "Oh no, not another racing game!" just hold on a sec and read on. This game is very different. There are no vehicles. No cars, boats, planes, trains or automobiles - just legs. You just run like mad through a course brimming with obstacles, power-ups, leaps, and bounds. Some of the power-ups are quite innovative too. The "Ice Bomb" blankets the entire level with a sheet of ice (the textures all change!) and, similarly, a "Mud Bomb" splashes a thick layer of muck everywhere slowing everyone down. Overall, it's kinda like a cross between *Crash* and *Mario Kart* (at 60 fps!). There are even secret areas and alternate routes (apparently the latest trend in racing games), but some of them are quite difficult to reach (even Mike from Universal couldn't reach one of them!). Also, there are speed boosts plastered all over the course (similar to *Wipeout*) and some are cunningly placed. The trick to doing well is learning the proper path, but that can actually be more than one route depending on the character you select.



Technically, the first thing that really struck me about this game was the frame rate. There is nothing quite like 60 fps. This is definitely one of the better PS 3D engines I have seen (although they are popping up quite a bit these days). There's very little warping and absolutely no draw-in. The music, however, leaves a bit to be desired. The tunes are a funkadelic hip-hop and are actually quite cool, I'm just not too crazy about the production (it sounds synthetic). Although the control can seem a little floaty, it is definitely solid and once you get used to the tracks, it becomes much easier. What about those beasts?



Universal must love animals. There are a total of six life-forms (no bandicoots, though!) and each one has a different boss when playing single player. After beating the game with a character, the boss will then be playable (a la *Tekken*). You can race as a mohawk-sporting zebra, a Mr. Universe-like elephant, or even a female panda bear talented in the arts of martial, apparently. The characters have individual strengths and weaknesses, so picking the right one for your style of play can be the difference between a victory and loss.

There are 6 different tracks (Desert, City, Volcano, Arctic, Jungle, and Moon), and each one is quite unique. The desert level, for example, has you tearin' through a canyon laden with cacti and thorned bushes that must be avoided at all costs. The jungle course requires precise timing as you have to jump onto logs to safely pass over nasty mud pits. All good fun, and quite original. Although there are only 6 tracks, each one is different depending on the difficulty level and eventually the tracks can be played in reverse.

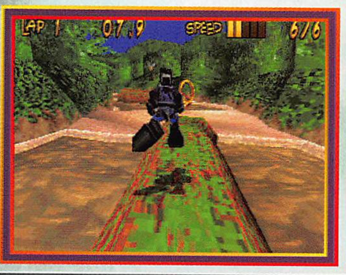


There are also several modes of play (Challenge, Practice Race, Time Trials, and Circuit) and even a 2-player or 4-player split screen option. In 2-player mode (great fun, by the way) the engine slows to 30 fps (most racers run at this speed in single player mode!), and in 4-player it crawls to a low 20 fps. Not bad though, considering the amount of code being executed here (4 engines running asynchronously).

Although the racing genre is busting at the seams; with an awesome engine, a very original theme, and a fun 2-player mode this game might stand out in the crowd. Kudos to Universal for bringing another high quality product our way!









P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER -UNIVERSAL

PUBLISHER -UNIVERSAL

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS -1-2

DIFFICULTY - EASY

AVAILABLE - 2nd QUARTER



MR. GOO
LOOK, IS THAT ROADRUNNER?

SHADOW MASTER













R REVIEW

PlayStation

- DEVELOPER - HAMMERHEAD
- PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1
- DIFFICULTY - HARD
- AVAILABLE - NOW



El Nino
Like Jager:
So-o-o-o-o smooth.

"The Ultimate Fantasy Shooter" is what *Shadow Master* claims. Now, I don't know about that, but there is no denying that *Shadow Master* is a fun, visually stunning, corridor shooter.

When you pop this puppy into your machine, the first thing you'll notice is how smooth it runs. *Shadow Master* is utilizing one monster of an engine. We're talking no slowdown, no polygon break-up and a whopping 60fps! After you ease into the flow, you'll marvel at the graphics.

Designed by popular British artist, Rodney Mathews, creator of the Image comic, *Hellshock*, *Shadow Masters* has a distinct look that will be readily identifiable by fans of his work. Those of you that aren't will just see a bunch of critters that look as though they are out of *Starship Troopers*, or *Alien*.

The game's one turn-off is how difficult it can be. With no options to set the difficulty level and no ability to save until a mission is completed, you are stuck battling, repeatedly, through missions until you get it right. In *Shadow Master*, you only get one life, so use it wisely. This old-school approach, while frustrating, can also be quite satisfying, when you successfully complete any stage.

It would be easy to disregard this game as another *Doom*-esque knock-off, but that would be completely untrue. Yes, it is a corridor shooter, complete with the standard compliment of goals and puzzles, but *Shadow Master* manages to rise above the pack in originality. You pilot a small vehicle, a la *Ghost In the Shell*, and the pace of the game feels more like *Descent* than *Doom* or *Quake*, with you constantly on the go.

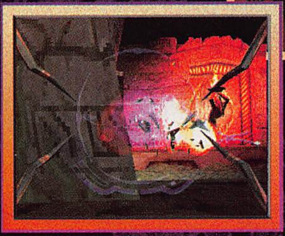
The level design is stellar and offers much in the way of visual candy. Each of the seven worlds have a distinctive look, keeping the game fresh and exciting. You will undoubtedly be impressed by the use (maybe even *overuse*) of visual tricks, such as lens flare and light-sourcing. Some of the hairier battles will look more like a Fourth of July show than a bug fight. This chaos keeps the adrenaline pumping and does make the inevitable restarting of missions less painless.

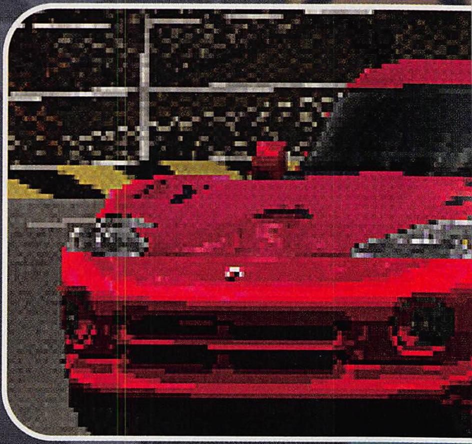
Shadow Master is a superb first person shooter that will undoubtedly entertain for hours. If you are a fan of the corridor contest, don't let this one sneak by.



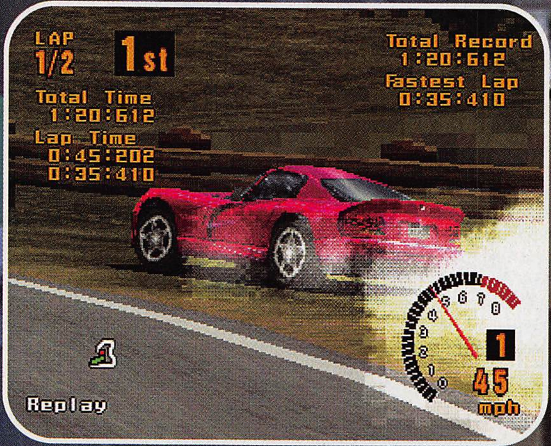


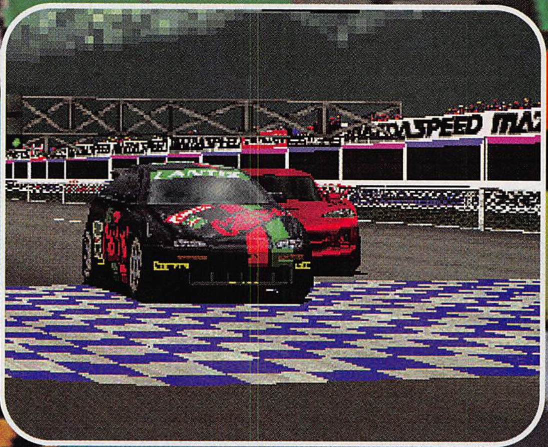






GRAN TURISMO
THE REAL DRIVING SIMULATOR





I know what you're thinking - the PS needs another racing game like Bill Gates needs more money. But before you start moaning 'they'll never top the Ridge Racer series,' let me just tell you that Gran Turismo is different. Different because it tackles the subject from a relatively new angle (new for console anyway) and different because it could just be the best racing game available on ANY home system. Strong words indeed, but if any game deserves them, it's Gran Turismo.

Where to start? Well, lets start with the game's biggest hook: the cars. Hundreds of them. All real cars licensed from their respective manufacturers and replicated in stunning polygon authenticity. Toyota, TVR, Aston Martin, Chrysler, Mazda, Nissan, Subaru, Chevrolet, Honda, Mitsubishi - the finest vehicles from all

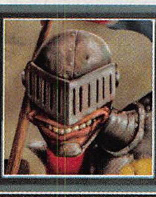
GRAN TURISMO™



around the world have been assembled with extreme care for your driving pleasure. And not only do they look like the real thing, but they handle like it too, thanks to a mind expanding number of statistics based on each car's actual performance in real life tests. Personally, the information provided is a little bit more than I need to know (I'm more a 'get in and drive' kind of guy), but if you get off on stats, you're going to be in seventh heaven with the sim aspects of Gran Turismo.

R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER -SONY	# OF PLAYERS -1-2
PUBLISHER -SCEA	DIFFICULTY - HARD
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE -2nd QUARTER



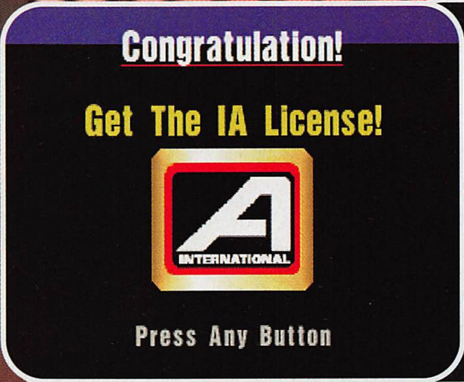
KNIGHTMARE
SO MANY CARS
SO LITTLE TIME.



GRAN TURISMO™

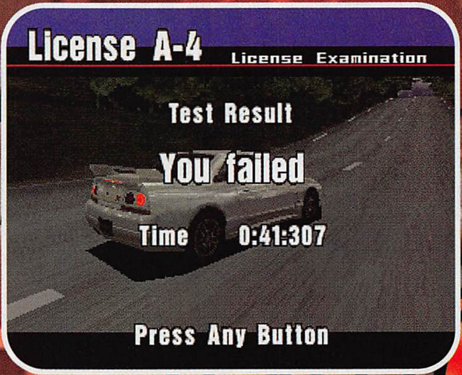
I already mentioned that the cars look amazing, but I didn't mention that the rest of the game looks almost as good. The engine throws around a vast number of polygons at a near constant 30fps (there's a hidden 60fps mode) with excellent trackside detail and virtually no pop-up. But as I say, the cars are the real stars! They just look amazing! The reflections on the windows are among the best graphical effects I've ever seen. Plus, If you squint while watching a replay it looks like TV coverage of a race - I kid you not! The tracks aren't quite as complex as the ones found in Rage Racer (in terms of trackside detail), but they're certainly not far off, and there are plenty more of them to choose between (six main tracks, each with several variations).

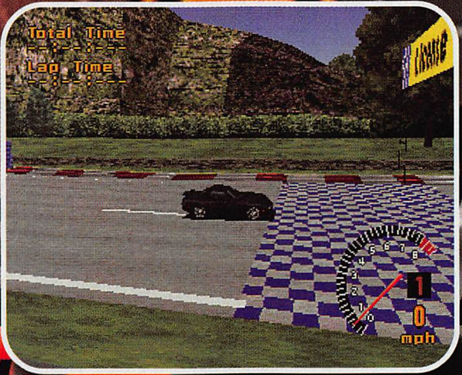
When you boot up the game you are given a choice between two main game modes: Quick Arcade and Gran



GET YOUR LICENSE!

Whilst playing in the Gran Turismo mode, certain races can only be attempted once you have obtained a particular license. There are three licenses in total - B, A, and A International - each consisting of eight separate timed 'tests.' A test could be anything from driving a lap of a track in a certain time to stopping inside a certain zone. Unfortunately, the computer decides what car you get to use for each test, and invariably it is the least suited vehicle for that track. Make sure there are no breakable objects nearby when you go for the International License!



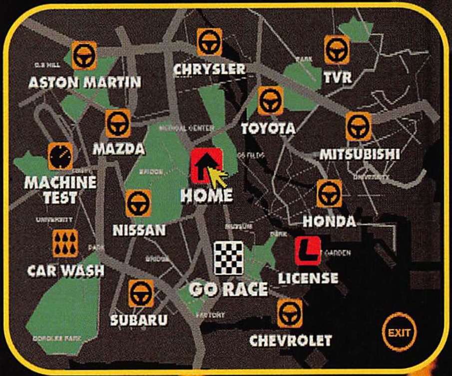




Japanese version only exclusive car companies tally a whopping total of 148 cars!!... A definite import purchase!!

ASTON MARTIN · CHEVROLET · MAZDA · CHRYSLER · SUBARU · TOYOTA · TVR · MITSUBISHI · HONDA · NISSAN

For every manufacturer, like Toyota, you can buy parts directly from TRD... Real parts from a real company! Now that's realistic!!

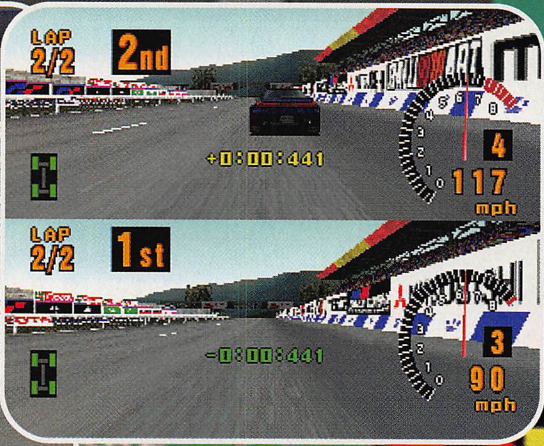




SPECIAL EVENTS

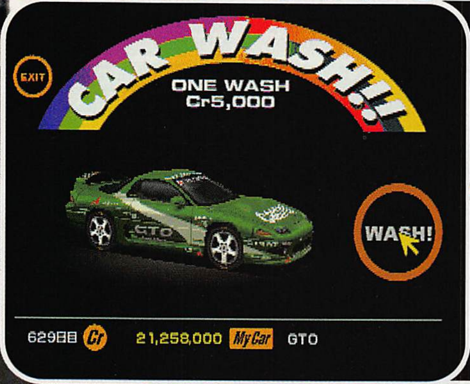
On top of the four main GT cup races, Gran Turismo mode also contains a number of 'special event' races, each with particular rules. Some require certain types of vehicle (front wheel drive, rear wheel drive, etc.), some require certain makes of vehicle (English, Japanese, American) and some just require a LOT of patience. How does 60 laps sound?

GRAN TURISMO™









WASH YOUR RIDE!

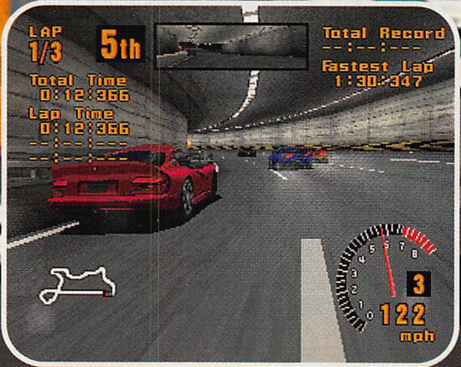
Eventually, your car will get dirty from all of the races you put it through. Luckily, you have a convenient CAR WASH that you can take any of your cars to and get cleaned! The gloss even shows in your replays!

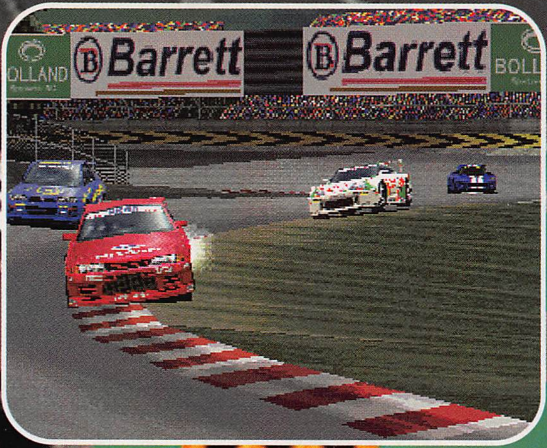


Turismo. Quick Arcade allows you to pick a car, pick a track, and jump right into a single race. This is the place to come for a quick adrenaline fix, and it's also where you can access Gran Turismo's extremely playable two player split screen Vs mode (which keeps the frame rate up but brings the clipping distance a little closer).

Gran Turismo mode, on the other hand, is the game's main single player driving 'quest,' sort of like a mini RPG. Begin a new game and you are given a million credits to purchase an inexpensive starter car from one of the many dealers. After that you must use that car in an attempt to build up credits on some of the easier races. Gran Turismo mode offers a wide variety of challenges, including numerous Special Event races (see box out) and the GT League - four main point accumulation cups of increasing difficulty spread over a number of tracks. The harder the race, and the higher the position you obtain, the more credits you are awarded for your troubles. As you earn credits, you have the option to either sup up your existing vehicle by buying new parts from your dealer, or to purchase an entirely new automobile to add to your 'garage.'

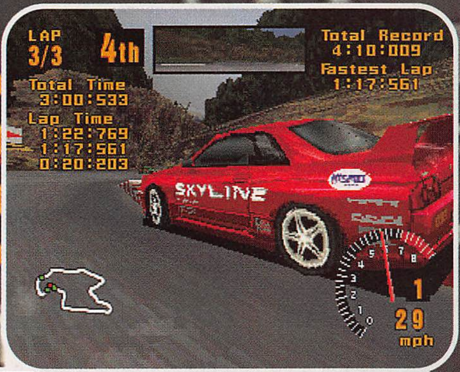
The more you play (and win) the more credits you earn, and the better a





car you can afford. In order to compete in the more advanced races (for big prizes) you will need a more powerful car, so perseverance is the order of the day. To complete the Gran Turismo quest properly you need to win a gold cup for EVERY race available, something that will require many, many hours of gameplay. Thankfully, investing those hours isn't going to be a problem - Gran Turismo plays every bit as good as it looks. Control is, as you would expect, extremely precise. The blend of realistic handling and arcade physics makes for a challenging and enjoyable race (you can bounce off walls and not total your car) and the sheer number of selectable vehicles means that you are bound to find something to suit your tastes.

You like speed? Pick a racer like Chrysler's Dodge Viper GTS. You like control? Pick a four wheel drive power house like Mitsubishi's GTO Twin Turbo. And if you're feeling really rich (to the tune of 50 million credits) you can even go for one of the many 'special' racing edition cars that some of the more prolific manufacturers have on sale. Through the custom set-up screen you can fine tune your car to control as YOU want it to, whether that be Ridge Racer style drifting or Grand Prix style road hugging. The fact is, whatever your preference or skill level, there's a car in Gran Turismo for you.





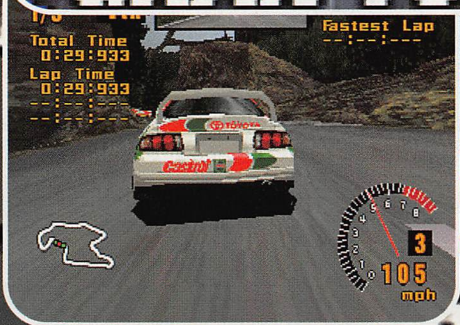
REPLAY THEATER

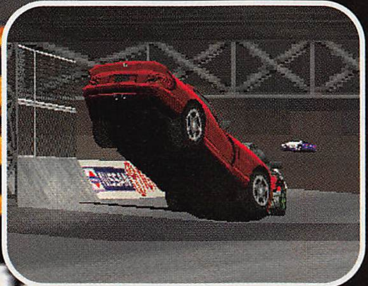
If you are particularly pleased with your performance in a race, you can save the replay to memory card for future viewing. Even better, you have the option to edit your replay and make it into a mini-movie! These replays are the graphical highlight of the game, and the Replay Theater is just the icing on the visual cake.



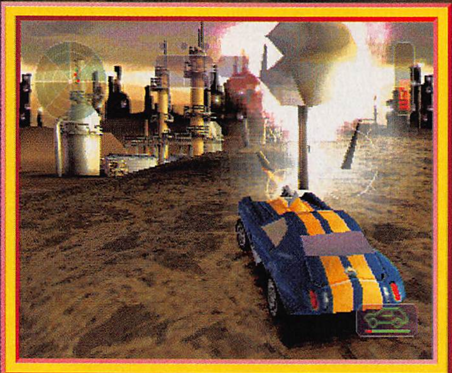
There's no doubt in my mind that Sony have a certifiable hit on their hands with Gran Turismo. I have never seen a console racing game with this much depth and content. However, there are some disturbing rumors going round that a due to SCEA's inability to secure the correct licenses, a large number of cars are going to be cut from the American version. Lets just hope this isn't the case, as it could spoil what might otherwise be THE definitive racer of '98. K

GRAN TURISMO™













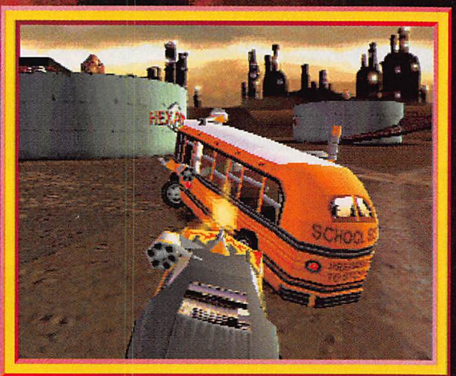
Vigilante eight 8

Activision's pact with the devil--which returned them from the dark corners of oblivion--has paid masssive dividends over the past few years, as the original 3rd party is growing at a rate to rival the Guvnor's rather irrational attraction to Japanese Akitas--"Here doggy, doggy. Nice puppy, be a good little git and come to the Guv's cage..." And while their external development and publishing divisions brought us **Nightmare Creatures** and **GTR** on consoles, as well as the power duo of **Quake 2** and **Hexen 2** on PC, their internal development has been a somewhat slow starter. It's not that they've released a large quantity of poor games, but more that their titles have been pretty good at best (**Mech Warrior 2**) and others have dropped off the face of the earth (**Apocalypse**, anyone?). While they seem to have the magic touch on outside development, it's been pretty quiet internally. That is, until now. **Vigilante 8** (**V8**) is set to take the world of vehicular combat--made frothingly, slobberingly popular by **Twisted Metal**--and bring it to new levels of gaming greatness. While this is only a preview (with only one playable car and level) I can, with 99.9% accuracy, tell you that this is going to be the game to beat in '98 (at least in the early going).

My passion for games of the **Twisted Metal** variety is equivalent to Shidoshi's love of anime chicks (and if you know anything about Shidoshi, that should speak volumes--and scare you). And while my obsession is what I'd call a little more healthy, we're both fanatics about our chosen, uh, diversions. When Singletrac proved that fighting games didn't always have to be about two muscle-bound monkeys, the world welcomed them with open arms and gaping wallets. Now that they've moved on to GT Interactive and left Sony to fend for







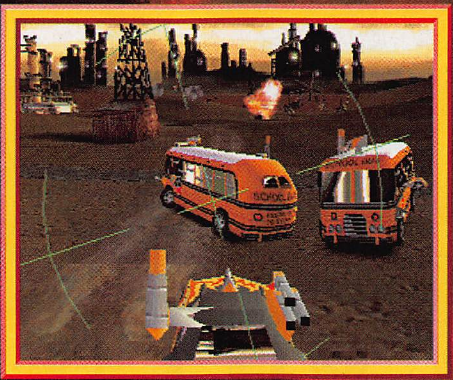
P PREVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - ACTIVISION	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - ACTIVISION	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE -2nd QUARTER



ECM
MORE TWISTED ?

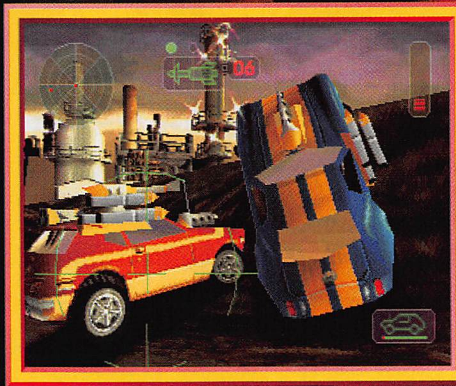








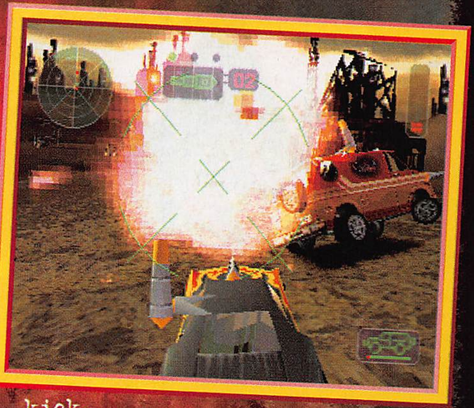




themselves with **TM3**, the field is wide open for Activision to storm the category with the most impressive car-'em-up ever. If this early copy is anything to go by, fans of vehicular homicide should be clawing at the walls of their rubber rooms in a slobbering, Wolfinger-esque frenzy.

Just what is about this game, even at such an early state, that has the whole of GameFan worked up into such a lather? It may have something to do with the phenomenal engine that features real-time reflection mapping and near-zero glitching and warping that makes **Twisted Metal** look, well, bad. Or maybe it's the intense gameplay, with multiple computer opponents out for your skin. It could possibly have something to do with the fantastic two-player split-screen mode; OK, so that isn't in yet, but looking at the rest of the game it's hard to believe that it won't be just as incredible as the rest. The only criticism I have right now, would be the late draw-in of some textures. A minor criticism, though, considering they're thinking of adding some depth-cueing; OK, so it's called fog--there, I said it.

And it's usually a good thing when multiple GameFan eds, layout staff and production artists crowd around a game that has only one level currently in place and only one car available for play and seeing them bite,



kick, scrape, and claw their way in for a go at a new game; and that was only after they heard what the game was about--it got really ugly when we actually got a look at the in-game graphics.

No worries on the 'personality' side, either. **V8** promises a huge cast of looney characters battling it out in '70s-era cars, all in the name of mindless destruction. No silly prizes this time (as in **Twisted Metal**), just good ol' fashioned gang warfare in the American southwest; who could ask for anything more?

At this point, it looks as if Activision may finally break the in-house development doldrums. Games like this don't come along very often, and with no **Twisted Metal** this past holiday season I know a lot of you are probably ready to take your Pacers out and do some damage. But hold on just a little bit longer, the king is coming... ***ECM***



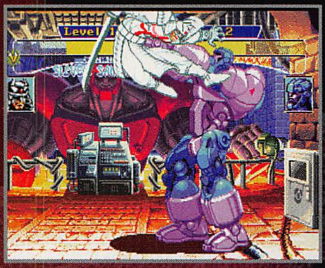




X-MEN:
CHILDREN OF THE ATOM



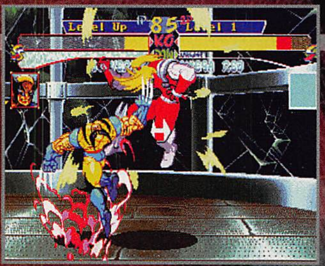




Well, well, well. What do we have here? If it isn't my old favorite, *X-Men COTA*. But what the hell is it doing on the PlayStation? I thought this game was never gonna appear. After all the crap that people were saying about the PSX not being able to handle 2-D fighters... <Tsk tsk tsk>. It has almost been three years since this game was announced and it seems that Acclaim finally got Probe to perform the conversion.

Now then, this game has some major issues. Mostly, these are loading times, frame rates, animation and most of all, slowdown. The loading times are really quite poor, and even though this conversion looks identical in screen shots, there are some serious frames of animation missing. Don't even think about having a 2 player game both using Sentinel! <Rocket Punch>. Still, it turns out to be quite enjoyable, and I don't really see why PSX owners shouldn't have the option to play *COTA*, even if it is inferior to the Saturn version. Personally, I love this game in all its formats, and I reckon you die-hard *Marvel* blokes and lassies will agree that it's quite a nice romp once you can see past the flaws. My only other beef is that the intro is a poor, grainy FMV sequence... It's all about RAM, baby, oh yeah.

So perhaps the PSX has a hard time with 2-D beat-em ups. I really can't wait to see what they do with *X-Men vs. Street Fighter*!!!

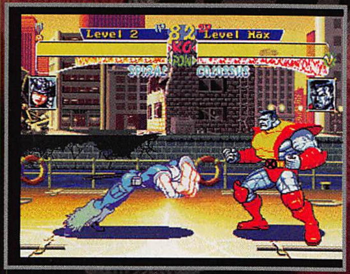












R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - Probe	# OF PLAYERS 1-2
PUBLISHER - Acclaim	DIFFICULTY -ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - Now

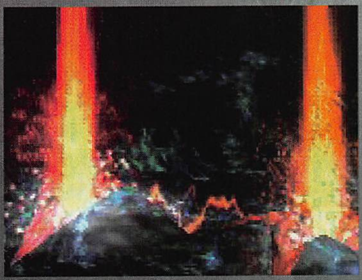


GUVNOR: I LIKE IT FIRM AND FRUITY. <AVANTI>

• Xenogears •

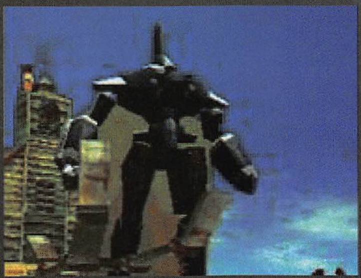
SQUARE · RPG · TBA





Square just doesn't know the meaning of rest. *Xenogears* is (surprise, surprise) another RPG from Square... now before most of you readers go "oh boy, another RPG from the RPG company... big deal," make your judgment after reading on and consider this: (1) anime sequences will be combined with 3-D computer graphics for story progression, first time ever in Square RPG history, (2) Production IG (responsible for the great anime sequences in the game *Ghost in the Shell*) is producing all the anime sequences, and (3) music is being done by Yoneda-san of *Chronotrigger* fame. To say the least, *Xenogears* is not just another RPG by Square, it's a major production. Much like Sega's *Grandia*, backgrounds are real-time texture-mapped, rendered polygons allowing full rotatable viewing. Noteworthy is the setting; unlike most RPG's, set in medieval times, *Xenogears* takes place in a science fiction setting, where the main character Wong Fei Wong, a young martial artist, seeks the true meaning of life and the true nature of God. If it sounds a bit deep for a video game, the anime sequences and mech-riding battles should definitely make this one to watch for. Originally unscheduled for the U.S., look for it winter of '98.







• Lunar silver star story •

WORKING DESIGNS · RPG · AUG.





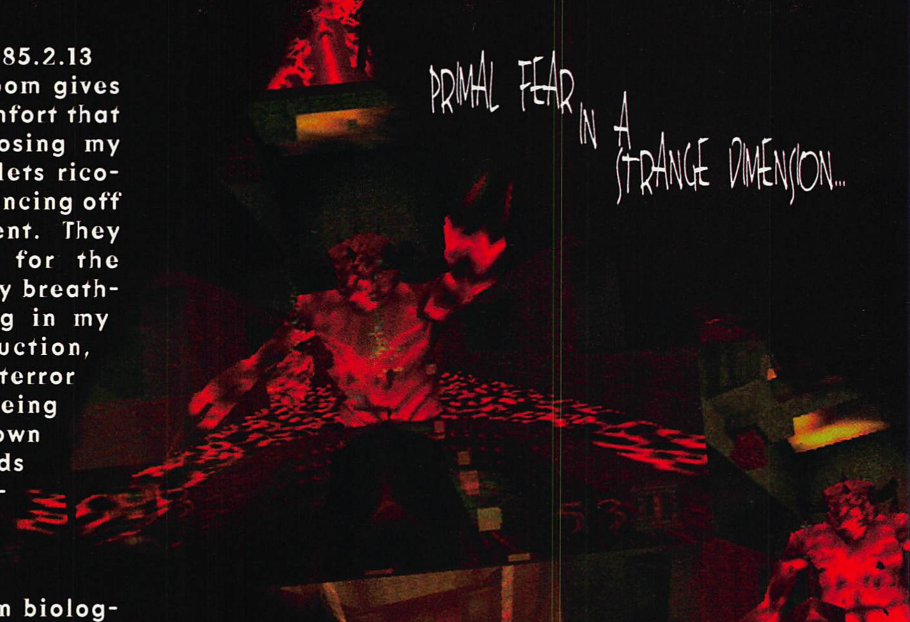
Saturn owners agonize while PlayStation owners rejoice! *Lunar: Silver Star Story* is coming to the US on the PlayStation. While no real reason for the change of heart from Sega to Sony is given, who cares??? Releasing in August of 1998, fans of the *Lunar* series will salivate at over 400% more animation from Kadokawa Shoten animation house. The "Complete" designation means that all the ideas Game Arts originally planned for the title on the Sega CD that were restricted due to technological limitations, are now "complete" for the PlayStation version. Ideas like over 50 minutes of MPEG-quality animation, new supporting cast characters, and a great sounding solo from Luna herself are just a few of the great features this game presents. And as always, Working Design's presentation of *Lunar: Silver Star Story - Complete*, will be as exceptional as the game itself. "This game is so special, the packaging must set a new high-mark to match," said Don Shirley, Marketing Manager for Working Designs. "We want to remain the industry leader when it comes to game packaging. With foil-stamped, embossed covers, full-color CD labels, and full-color manuals, nobody has even come close to our award-winning quality and we tend to keep it that way..."







QUAKE



PRIMAL FEAR IN A STRANGE DIMENSION...

War Journal Entry 2185.2.13
The blackness of the room gives my body some small comfort that I'm alone for now. Closing my eyes, I hear the metallic sounds of bullets ricocheting off walls, grenade canisters bouncing off the floor, and shotgun rounds being spent. They rage in my head like a symphony for the damned... worse are the sounds of heavy breathing, alien battle cries and the ringing in my ears; a deafening clamor of destruction, chaos, and death. But nothing invites terror more than the sight of the squad being pulped before my very eyes; limbs blown off, bodies minced by chainsaws, friends charred to death by bolts of supernatural force. It has been two months since that first encounter with the minions of "Quake." It's also rumored that captured troops from our side have been biologically altered to fight against us. I really don't give a rat's ass about any of that. The pounding in my head is sheer torture; pain that yearns for release. And, lucky for them (and unlucky for 'Quake'), I've been chosen, because of my "psychological advantage", to delve deep into the slipgate portals and cause some damage. Alone, no backup, no communications and no real plan. And though I'm aching for some payback, unknown horrors haunt my memories. Slipgate launch is in two hours... this may be my final entry, not as a live soldier, but as a sane one...

It all started with *Wolfenstein 3-D* - blasting Nazi's into bloody mounds of flesh not only gave us an adrenaline rush, but fed our frenzy for fast paced action. *Doom* took the idea and not only made it better, but added a darker environment, complete with spawns of Hell, the likes of which no one had imagined. *Quake* not only improves on *Doom* greatly in every aspect of 3-D graphics, but with rough and rugged sounds, a slash n' mash soundtrack (a la Trent Reznor), and an atmosphere of anarchy and anxiety, perfects and places it at the top of the fast-growing 3-D shooting genre. Those who haven't heard of *Quake* either have nothing to do with computers at all, or are perhaps the most ignorant humans on this side of the green earth. In any case, those who have not been blessed (or cursed, depending how much you play *Quake*) with flavorful fragging fun are lucky, as *Quake* is coming home on the Nintendo 64 with nary a shake or jitter.

Quake 64 loses nearly nothing from the PC in terms of gameplay. You'll find strafing just as accurate as the PC, as well as advanced tactics like rocket jumping. But for those PC faithfuls, don't think the port from keyboard + mouse to N64 will be that easy. Unless you played *Turok* extensively, PC *Quake* fans (like moi) will find the controls somewhat awkward and confusing. Of course, an hour's worth of fragging will shake the kinks out of the traditional shell, though veteran *Turok* players should have no prob-

lem adapting to the controls.

Graphically, it's a mixed bag. This is, of course, coming from a *Quake* addict from hell, so when I base the graphics entirely by itself, it's quite nice. However, closeups of some textures give it a distorted look; in two words, pretty ugly. There are some nice trailing graphics, and the underwater stages are quite nifty with its distortion effects, but there's something missing... and that's light. Yes, *Quake* is a rather dark environment, but *Quake 64* is very dark. And though there's good light sourcing throughout the game, you'll notice that firing weapons will not yield the dynamic lighting found on the PC version. It's really weird to fire a rocket across a darkened hall without it illuminating its path to your unfortunate target.

Of course, the biggest and perhaps most fatal change that *Quake 64* will have is the lack of sixteen player battles of justice. Known as a significantly better multiplayer game than a single player game, *Quake 64* supports only two players. While this is somewhat lacking in terms of long-term enjoyment (unless you're one of the 19:49 perfectionists), two player mode loses very little detail and thankfully little to no slowdown. However, the two player mode screen is rather tiny, so finding an already hiding target becomes a real chore.

For those audibly inclined, *Quake 64* remains quite faithful it's Nine Inch Nails tunes. Also, sound effects are identical to the paranoid, mechanical grumblings of the its PC sister, which in one word, is music to my ears. *Quakes'* sound effects, more than any 3-D corridor shooter, play a huge role in not only the gameplay, but also in the whole character of the game, as sound effects crescendo from dismally silent, to explosively blaring. It's a great rush to be running away from an opponent with rockets detonating at your feet and streaking pass your head... oh, and vice versa.

For those seeking a good multiplayer bloodbath, *Goldeneye* would probably be more your cup of tea, as it supports four players in a John Woo fest of metal slugs. But for those seeking more of a solo romp in the tradition of *Turok*, *Quake 64* not only fills the need for some fleshy fragmentation, but it's a fresh look for those that haven't had the pleasure for true classic fragging.



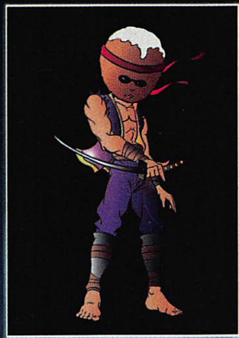
The mythical past comes alive...

your worst nightmare comes true...

R REVIEW

NINTENDO 64

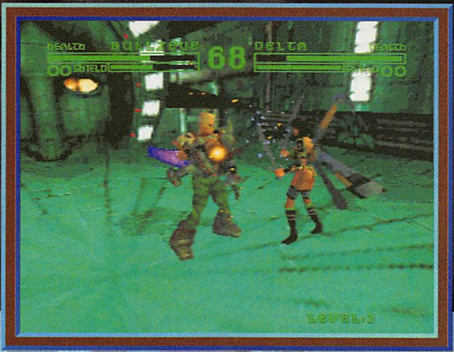
- DEVELOPER - ID
- PUBLISHER - MIDWAY
- FORMAT - CART
- # OF PLAYERS - 1-2
- DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
- AVAILABLE - MARCH



DANGO

Festive frenzied fraggin in it's full form.







Bio-FREAKS







With all the concern about the inevitable coming of bio-engineered humanity, this topical fighting-fest shows us the folly of fooling with brother Biology. *Bio-Freaks* was only able to achieve a limited stint in the roughneck world of the arcades (word has it that the only light of day able to shine on this title was during a short-lived test run in a Northern California video). But don't take that the wrong way; this is Midway we're talking about, and that means a few things: good graphics, professional presentation, spine-shivering sounds, and great flying gobs of red goo!

The graphics, animation, and special effects are a delight to behold. The background and character texture maps are detailed to a level that would appear to be the result of sorcerous trickery. How Saffire was able to create such a sparkling gem of a conversion is beyond this rodent reporters wildest delusions. The deviantly designed arenas are filled with all sorts of deadly traps; all rendered at an arcade level of quality. All manner of mechanical manifestations, that are the source of the battlers superhuman abilities, are believably envisaged and stunningly animated. Many props thrown in Saffire's general direction.

Although in the thirty percent version I witnessed the sounds were not correctly installed, there is no doubt that Midway will have an excessive amount of death's-door









PREVIEW

NINTENDO 64

DEVELOPER - SAFFIRE	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - MIDWAY	DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - 2ND QTR. '98



P.RATT
Midway producing a good 3D fighter?! Will miracles never cease!
















wails and lunch-losing reproductions of corporeal mutilations! Even without the correct sounds in place (MK sounds were instead played at random...highly amusing), the characters have ample personality with extremely cool intro and victory animations. These grizzled warriors have personalities and fighting styles that could be used to define "bad ass!"

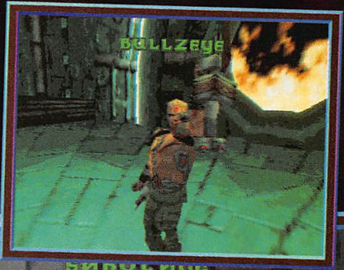
Blood! No modern Midway game prohibits the profuse expenditure of precious plasma, and *Bio-Freaks* is definitely from the famous Midway mold. Polygon games are by no means excluded; fatalities, limb-removal, and camera splatters fit their way into every brutal battle. The blood-letting is interrupted by the occasional sidestep, flying battles (you have a "*Cyberbots*-ish" jump button that allows many varieties of aerial assaults), block enhancements and block disablers, throws, and special cy-BIO-rg moves that brilliantly broadcast the inhuman power these pugilists possess!

This game is a sleeper for now, but if Saffire keeps up the good work, a very jolly summer awaits the fighting gamers among you. P-Ratt says to keep your sniffer directed toward this game in the coming months... 'sniff'. ***PR***







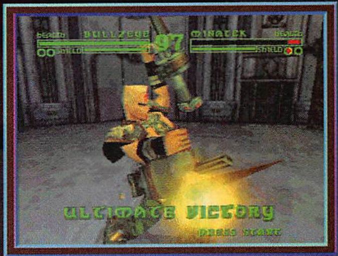














A few months back some of you may recall how I raved about the PS port of *Rampage: World Tour*. While a great many readers figured I was insane (as did many of my co-workers), those that gave it a chance discovered that it was indeed worth a shot just for sheer nostalgia value. And while the PS rev featured all of the building-trashing goodness of the arcade edition, it also had rougher graphics, choppier animation and no 3-player mode—the single biggest negative against that version. The N64 improves on that version on all

RAMPAGE
WORLD TOUR









counts. For those of you that did see my slightly positive review of *Rampage* PS (and probably had a good laugh at it), this is going to sound a whole lot like it; only better.

Making the rather broad assumption that most know that *Rampage* is about monsters tearing down buildings, stomping buildings, and devouring people—much like El Nino at an all-you-can-eat buffet—I'll spare you the gorier details and chat mainly about the differences between the two (three if you count the poor Saturn version that we left out in the cold).

Whereas the PS and SS versions featured only 4-bit color depth, the N64 does them both one better with a mixture of 4- and 8-bit. What this means for you is smoother gradations in color. So where the PS rev had a nasty dithered look in some areas (especially on S-Video and RGB set-ups), this cart has smooth-blending overall colors and there is no shortage of beautiful, clean hues. In fact, the color rivals the coin-op edition. The animation is also a notch above its closest rivals, and the frame rate soars. So basically what you get is a graphically superior version (which shouldn't be much of a surprise) that is more playable due to the increased frame rate.



Midway also saw fit to put back a number of bonus rounds that were axed from the CD editions (why oh why?!). Especially notable is the ring where you and your fellow beasties go toe-to-toe, proving who's the toughest in town, and a sequence with lots of little para-troopers falling from the sky as you pluck 'em and chomp 'em..yummie!

Anyway, you get the idea. This is *Rampage* in all its glory and I know I'll be grabbing a copy, despite having the PS and SS revs already—I know, I have problems. So do yourself a favor: Skip *MK Mythologies* and pick up *Rampage* instead. And for those of you that already bought *MK*, well, we warned ya. *ECM*



REVIEW

NINTENDO 64

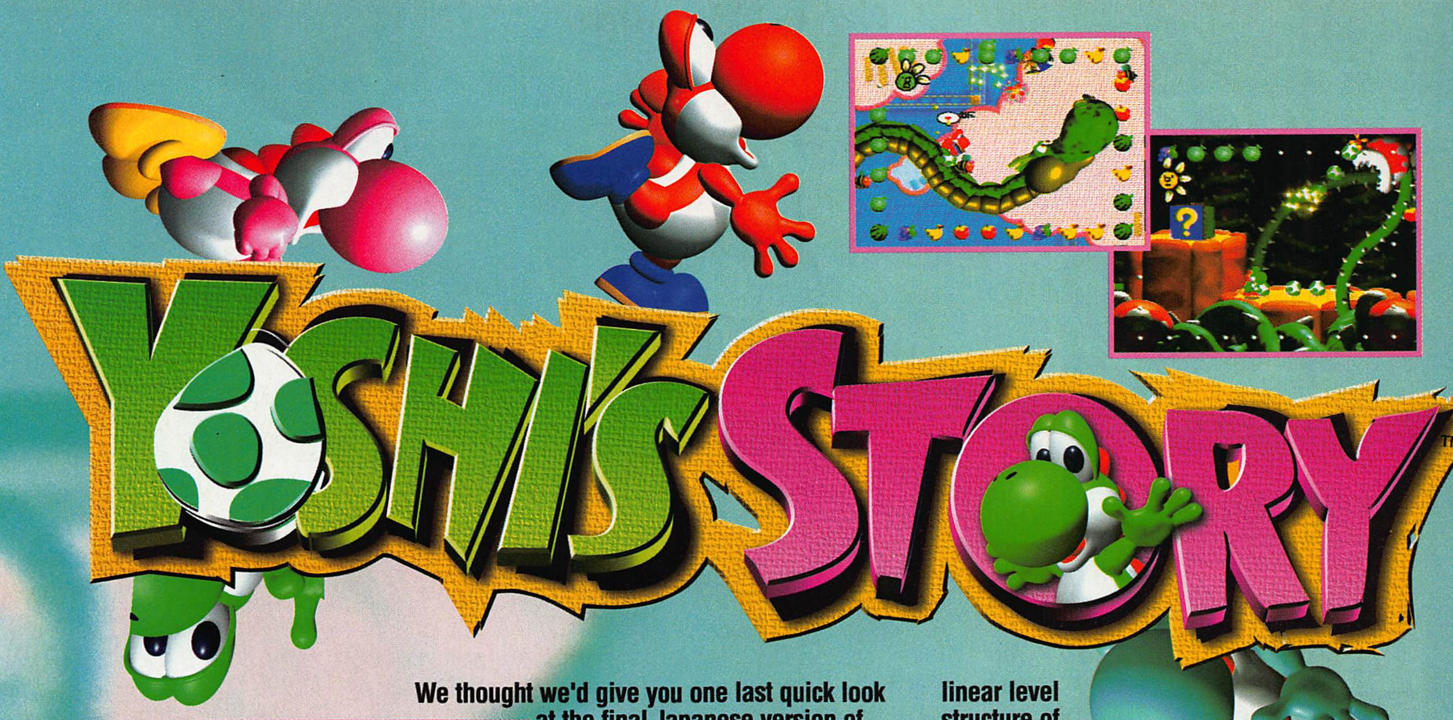
DEVELOPER - SAFFIRE
PUBLISHER - MIDWAY
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE

OF PLAYERS - 1-3
DIFFICULTY - EASY
AVAILABLE - NOW



ECM
More stompin' and chompin' goodness!!

Yoshi's Story



We thought we'd give you one last quick look at the final Japanese version of *Yoshi's Story* in anticipation of the game's stateside release. As of this writing, Nintendo has yet to release precise details concerning changes to the US version, so keep that in mind as you process the information from this preview.











Like *Yoshi's Island* before it, *YS* is a 2D platformer, trading the coloring book look of the first for renders. While some may appreciate the imaginative artistry of the original's hand drawn look, the equally pretty and incredibly smooth looking prerendered elements of *YS* lend a suitably next generation look to the proceedings. Not to mention the fact that Yoshi himself is probably the single most animated character ever to appear in a Nintendo game. He looks simply amazing in his run and idle animation.

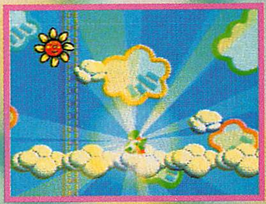
Where *YS* differs most form *Island* is in its level structure, and it is here that many (including myself) have taken issue with the design of the game, at least as it stands in the Japanese version. Basically, you play through only six levels to reach the end boss. While there are 24 stages total, only one area (of four) from each of the six pages can be played at a time. I much prefer the linear level structure of *Island* instead of this which forces you to go back and play the game all the way through several times just to see all the levels. In fact, the levels don't even have a physical "end." Rather, you beat a level once Yoshi has ingested thirty fruit, the most valuable of which are melons. As in *StarFox*, you're playing for points, only they don't affect the outcome or level order in Story.

The other big change in *YS* is the implementation of sniffing. Yes, sniffing. There are things hidden in the ground (melons, coins, secret platforms, etc) that can only be found by sniffing around. It's an interesting and refreshing new idea, but when you've sniffed around an entire level looking for one melon, it doesn't seem quite so great any more, I don't care how smoothly it zooms in.

YS is undoubtedly a fantastic game, with perfect analog control, really pretty graphics and hints of Nintendo magic. But in comparison to *Island*, it pales in sheer fun. Since most of you will be buying the US version, remember that changes made during localization may very well fix some of the more overt problems with the game. SD







UPDATE

NINTENDO64

DEVELOPER - NINTENDO

PUBLISHER - NINTENDO

FORMAT - CART

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - EASY

AVAILABLE - MARCH

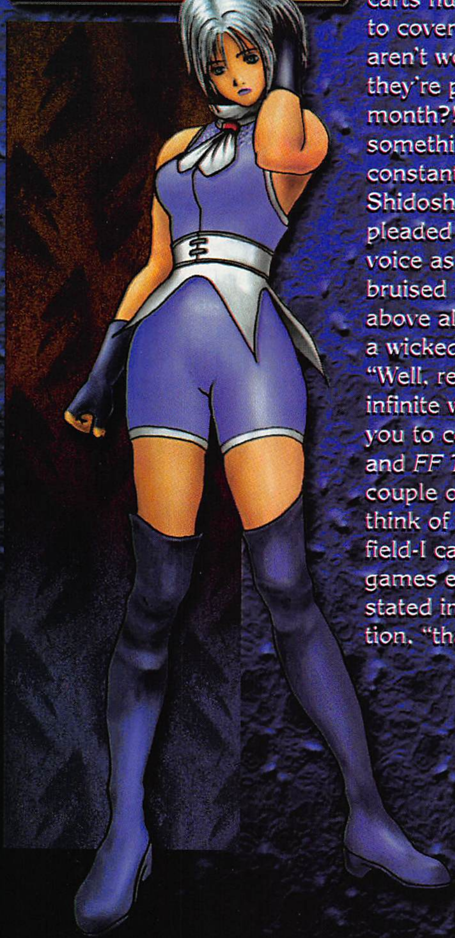
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????????
Eeeepehpoh!

Fighters Destiny





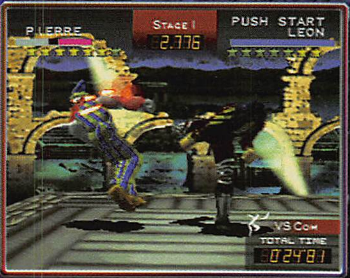




"Thank you sir, may I have another?" I cried as tears rolled down my frustrated cheeks. <SMACK> "There ya go lackey, enjoy!" the evil ed-in-chief proclaimed menacingly as he winged the review copy of Fighter's Destiny at my not quite quick enough head-<THWACK>! "But why?!" I cried out in fury, and not a little shame (not to mention some serious pain - 'dem carts hurt!). Why do I have to cover 3D fighters that aren't worth the silicon they're pressed on EVERY month?!. Does this have something to do with the constant jokes about Shidoshi's manhood?" I pleaded in a most pathetic voice as I cradled my bruised noggin'. The ed above all then boomed with a wicked glint in his eye, "Well, remember how in my infinite wisdom I allowed you to cover *Bloody Roar* and *FF Tactics* over the last couple of months? Just think of this as leveling the field-I can't give you great games every month," he stated in mock exasperation, "that might give you a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment, and there will be none of that on my watch," he roared as an ugly sneer played across his face. So, resigned to my fate (note to self: rig Ed's car with high order nuclear device and strap Shidoshi to it), I went forth to review Ocean's latest (where is Mission Impossible, btw?) with a great deal of hesitation. But could it be? Is this game actually something worth playing? Hmmm, could be...

Since the N64 has been a veritable wasteland for the serious fighting game fan (any of you that think *Killer Instinct Gold* is a serious fighter should strike themselves repeatedly with the nearest blunt instrument... something like Kid Fan, perhaps) you're probably willing to accept just about anything at this point. Thankfully *Fighter's Destiny* isn't just another game made to cash-in on the 'we're so des-













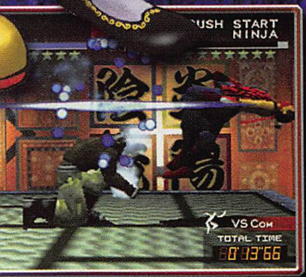


perate for software that we'll make *Cruisin USA* a best-seller' N64 fans.

Visuals-wise, *Fighter's Destiny* isn't what I would call the pinnacle of texture mapped excitement with rather bland, washed-out colors and fairly blocky characters. The animation is also a tad on the stiff side, but it gets the job done - it won't cause the *Virtua Fighters* and *Tekkens* of the world any lost sleep, that's for sure. The character designs are also pretty unimpressive. Featuring typical country-based characters like Ryuji, a kickboxer form Japan; Abdul, an Arab from, uh, Mongolia; and who could ever forget Ninja also hailing from the Land of the Rising Sun. Now would be a good time to hire some character designers away from SNK.

Ah, but what it lacks in visual punch it more than makes up for with some rock-solid, beat 'em down gameplay. As was covered in the preview, winning matches isn't about whose life bar runs out first, although that can help out. It's based more on various ways of taking guys down - more like a wrestling match, I suppose (real wrestling, not WCW-"RESPECT!"). By performing throws and various holds you earn points totalling to seven to win a particular bout. For instance, submission holds can earn you an instant victory, while ring-outs only net you one out of seven total points counting towards a complete victory. Along with this different way of handling a fighting game, you also get responsive control in 3D as well as some nice combos which are displayed with the now standard combo meter. Some super moves round-out the package with Capcom-esque moves and some nice lighting on some of the fire effects. Overall it's a good fighter that makes the other offerings on N64 look wretched in comparison. Then again, they really didn't need too much help in that area, did they?

Well that about sums it up. A very solid fighter for the N64 that is a little painful to look at, but scads of fun to play. While it certainly won't win any awards (ow, ain't that rather cliche) but you could do worse; much worse. And as for Mr. Smart Guy editor, well, I figured simply locking him in an office with Shidoshi was far more punishment than anyone deserves...enjoy! Cue muffled cries of anguish,"No, no more Sailor Moon!!! Have you no soul?!"...











R REVIEW

NINTENDO 64

DEVELOPER -GENKI

PUBLISHER -OCEAN

FORMAT - CART

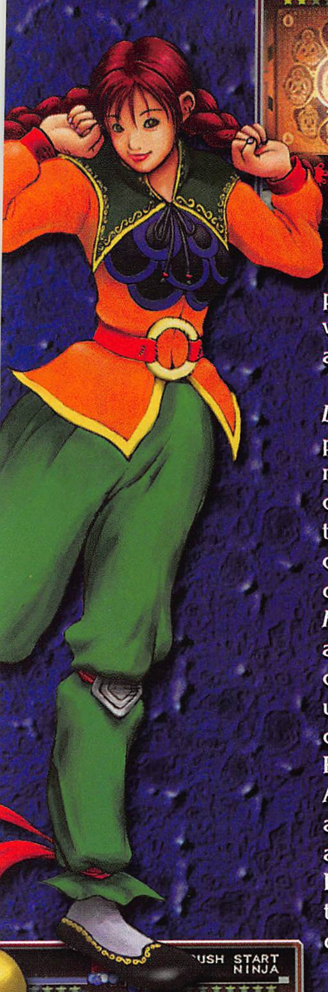
OF PLAYERS 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW



ECM:
"YEAH,AND YOU THOUGHT SUMO 64 WAS PRETTY GOOD."



MYSTICAL NINJA STARRING GOEMON









You know, it's funny, when the N64 debuted in '96 and made big (BIG!) waves with *Mario 64*, the one type of game we all assumed the system would NOT be lacking two years down the line was 3D platformers. After all, *Super Mario Bros.* on the NES was followed by literally hundreds of clones and ditto with *Super Mario World* on the SNES. Yet in almost two years since the system's launch there has not been one true (read "decent") 3D platformer released in the US for the N64. Kind of weird, don't you think? Well, don't think too long because Konami is gearing up to fix that situation as we speak with a timely US release of the latest incarnation in their popular *Goemon* (as it's called in Japan) series: *Legend of the Mystical Ninja 64*.

To be fair, *Mystical Ninja 64* isn't just a straight *Mario 64* clone. Although the bulk of the game does indeed bear more than a passing resemblance to Miyamoto's 3D classic, *Mystical Ninja 64*, like its 16-bit predecessors, adds a little spice to the mix. There are multiple characters to control (each with their own special abilities and upgradeable weapons), various sub-games (including the requisite giant







The ubiquitous mystical ninja is back! This time he's fighting a mysterious group of villains known as the Peach Mountain Shoguns. Goemon starts the game with his basic club and the ability to throw Ryo (money) but throughout the adventure will acquire a grappling "hook" (Zelda style!) and the ability to power up Ryo into fireballs! Goemon's magic, 'Sudden Impact,' throws Goemon into a rage where his hair turns yellow and all his attacks do double damage.



R REVIEW | **NINTENDO 64**

DEVELOPER - KONAMI	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - KONAMI	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - 128 MEG CART	AVAILABLE - NOW



KNIGHTMARE
The N64 needs more games like this!



EBISUMARU

Goemon's long-time companion, the somewhat fruity Ebisumaru, is available to control from the outset of your quest. Ebisu attacks with his mallet and, during the course of the game, will acquire a red mallet that turns slain enemies into health power-ups; a camera that makes ghosts solid and reveals secret paths; and the power to shrink on cue. Tiny Ebisumaru can fit into smaller nooks and crannies not normally accessible.





robot battle scenes) and perhaps most significantly, an RPG-like structure. It's not exactly *FFVII*, but there are towns to visit, dungeons to explore, characters to talk to, and shops to, well, shop in.



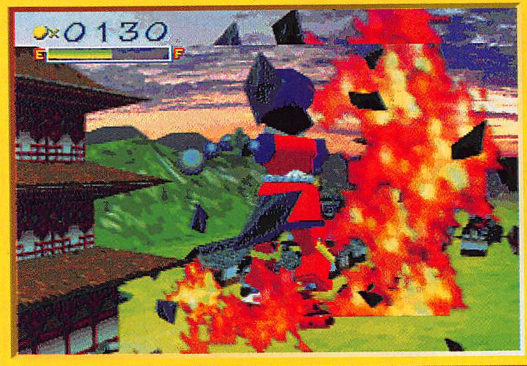
Of course, none of this is new to the *Goemon* series. The formula has remained pretty much the same since the original *Goemon* (three on the SNES, one on the PS) and *Mystical Ninja 64* merely takes that formula and, like *Mario 64*, updates the 2D side-scrolling action with 3D free-roaming adventure. Has it worked? In my opinion, YES!



YAE

Joining Goemon in Mystical Ninja 64 is the beautiful and deadly Yae, an undercover operative that teams up with Goemon to help stop the Peach Mountain Shoguns. Yae starts with her basic sword, but during your journey will acquire a magic flute (used for summoning a friendly blue Chinese dragon), a shoulder-mounted homing cannon, and the ability to turn into a mermaid! While transformed, Yae can swim underwater indefinitely.

First off, *Mystical Ninja 64* looks great. Modeling its visuals on *Mario 64* certainly hasn't hurt it any, and while the frame rate may occasionally stutter (it drops to around 20 at times), the level design and environmental detail is, in my opinion, even more impressive than *Mario*. Just take a look at these shots and you'll see what I mean. As with previous *Goemons*, the character design and architecture are totally Japanese in style, and, yes, there is a healthy disregard for sanity. There aren't a lot of games that feature a canned-laughter soundtrack or let you swim in a giant bowl of ramen.





Shock no. 1: the texture quality is good. After being bombarded with blurry, low-quality textures in dozens of N64 releases, it is incredibly refreshing to see a blur/fog-free engine.



SASUKE

The robot ninja Sasuke also makes a return in Mystical Ninja 64. First you've got to find him, locate his battery and then take a picture at the top of a very big tree (you'll see). Sasuke starts with his basic slashing knife (sort of a darty, throwing star kind of knife), but obtains bombs, throwing knives (errr, uhh, see above knife comment) that freeze enemies and platforms on contact, and best of all, a jet pack for short bursts of flight! Plus he just looks so darned cool.













Prepare for Impact!

At times during your quest, Goemon will need to take control of the giant robot IMPACT for some one-on-one mech combat action. These sections take the form of two stages, the first being an isometric, scrolling stomp-a-thon where you must power up IMPACT by destroying enemy forces, and the second being the actual battle itself. For me, these sections are the highlights of the game. They look amazing and play even better!



Shock no. 2: the music is **GREAT**. Catchy, well composed, high quality and totally appropriate. After *GoldenEye* and *Tetrisphere*, this is my favorite N64 soundtrack to date and proof once more that the N64 CAN do good music when the developers apply themselves. There's even a couple of songs in there for Miyamoto's sake (and kudos to Konami for leaving them in!).

Thankfully, the gameplay is also top notch. Like *Mario 64* was a logical progression for the *Mario* series, *Mystical Ninja 64* seems similarly suited to "go anywhere" 3D environments. Most of the action is *Mario 64*-style platform hopping, with some hand-to-hand combat thrown in for good measure, and it works pretty darn well. Control with the analog pad is fluent, and the camera system is implemented in a similar fashion to *Mario 64* (though not quite as well). Basically, if you're familiar with *Mario 64*, you'll be able to pick up and play *Mystical Ninja 64* immediately.

As I mentioned earlier, there are RPG elements and sub-games which break up the action and add a nice non-linear structure to your quest; and it's a real novelty to see these features implemented successfully in a *Mario 64*-style 3D adventure. Having the awesome giant robot battle scenes (which are both amazing looking and great fun) is just the icing on the cake.

You know what? I really like *Mystical Ninja 64*. It's exactly the kind of fun, good looking, great sounding game the N64 is in desperate need of right now. *Goemon* fans are going to be over the moon about it, and rightly so. It's everything you could have hoped for in a 32-bit, err, excuse me, 64-bit *Goemon*. Check it out. You'll be glad you did. ***K***







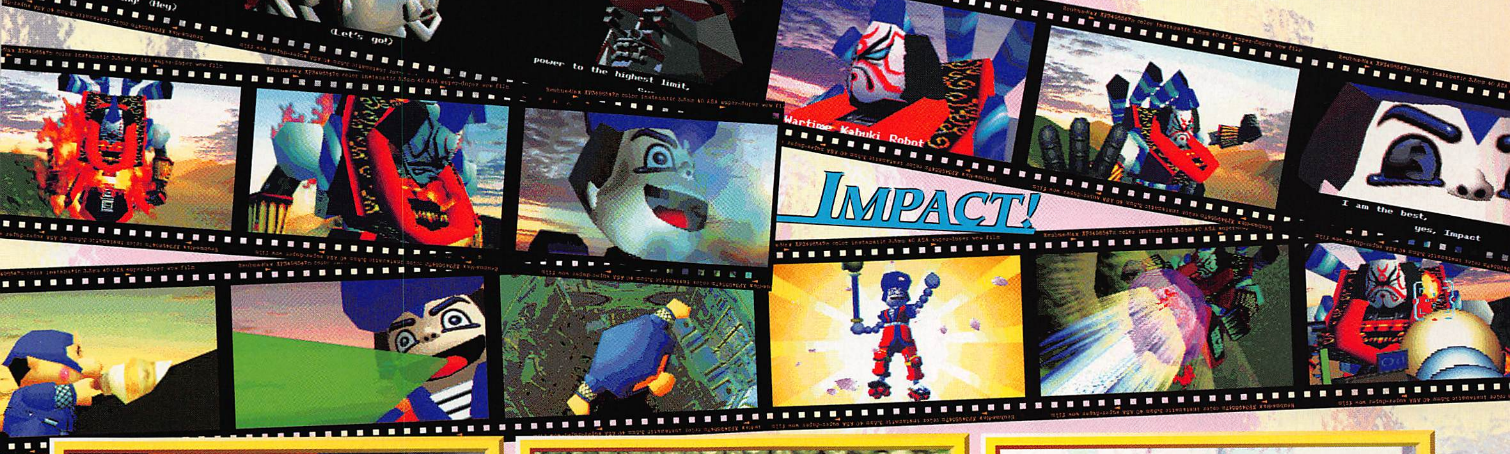




CUT-SCENES... ON N64?!

Mystical Ninja 64 features a number of extremely impressive real time cut scenes, including an excellent intro and ending. The cut scene introducing IMPACT before each of his fights is simply awesome!













PLASMA!

Stuck? Don't know where to turn? Then take a quick trip to your local fortune-teller. For a simple, small fee he will inform you of what you need to do next to progress. However, the mental fee may be quite a bit more. You see, the Plasma man is, er, well he's.... he's not right. You'll see.













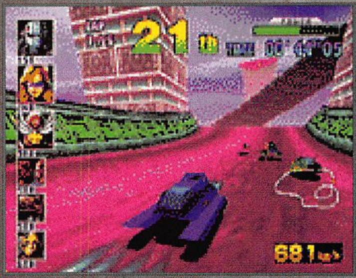




• F-Zero X •

NINTENDO • RACING • TBA





Ah... remember those good old days on the Super Nes??? Remember *F-Zero*, still one of the most innovative racing games that previewed Mode 7 madness? Remember the promises of a sequel that never did come on the Super Nes?? Well, burn those memories baby and get ready for some powerful racing, it makes *Days of Thunder* feel like a carousel ride. Running at a constantly blazing 60 frames per seconds, with absolutely no slowdown even in multiplayer mode, *F-Zero X* is looking to keep Nintendo's promise of "quality over quantity" philosophy. Thank the gods for Shigeru Miyamoto; *F-Zero X* looks to be the fastest racing game ever made. Video of the game looks amazing with no fog to hide any pop-up... not that there is any pop-up at all.

With over 30 hover cars to choose from (YIKES!), each with their own individual weight, thrust, and handling attributes, test driving the right one will be a joy. Gameplay is the traditional, but still great, racing game on the o.g. Super Nes. There's no weapons, power-ups or anything of that sort. Speed boosts that expend your shield energy with strategically placed speed boosting arrows are all you have to get ahead of your fellow rocket jockeys. Add your driving know-how as you blast through winding roads, suspended bridges, and unique terrain, to win at this game. And at speeds of 1,000 kilometer per hour, you won't have time to use weapons if there were any. Japanese release is scheduled for June of 1998, while a US release date has yet to be announced. But don't fret, we'll keep this one in our sights no matter how fast it comes and goes.







• Zelda: The Ocarina of Time •

NINTENDO • ACTION/RPG • TBA





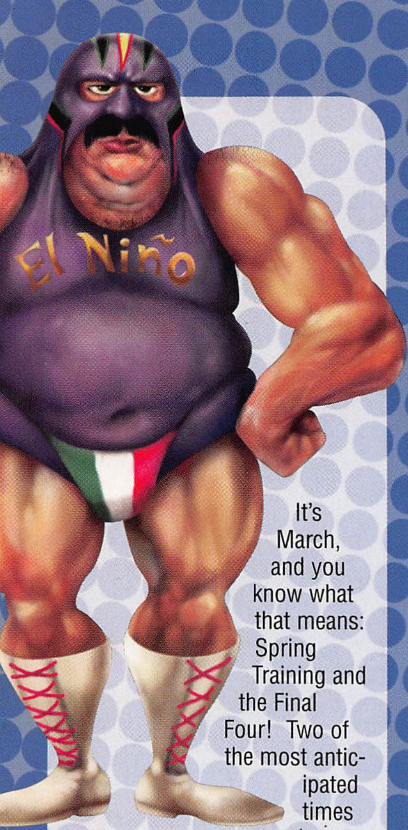
Closer and closer the day comes that *Zelda* will find its way home to the U.S. video game consumer. Soon we will be able to enjoy enchanting experiences in the world of Hyrule. And at nearly 90% complete, the day comes near enough to grab it. Lucky are those (like us GameFan staff... jealous is you!!!) who have the opportunity to see the game running. Once again graced by the touch of Shigeru Miyamoto, *Zelda: The Ocarina of Time* (remember what an Ocarina is?) is setting out to be game of the year. A small video intro of the game was seen at the Nintendo Summit; anyone with a heart condition wasn't invited. Miyamoto is aiming to do what he did with *Mario 64*; create a game so revolutionary as to create a new standard of gaming. Adding gorgeous 3D graphics is not enough, for gameplay changes have been made for the better. Link can attack with his sword in numerous ways. And to help with targeting enemies when using missile weapons, a "lock on" feature has been added. While this might seem to be a bit complex, it's more of a natural step in the proper evolution from 2D to 3D. Though little music or sound has been heard that is noteworthy, it shouldn't be something to worry about with Miyamoto on the case. A tentative March 1998 release in Japan is in the works, while the US might see Zelda in the 2nd half of '98. Questions on what type of hardware it will be seen on (cart, 64DD, or a combination of both) have yet to be answered or addressed. Till then, be mesmerized by the screenshots supplied, and have patience, for Link will return soon...








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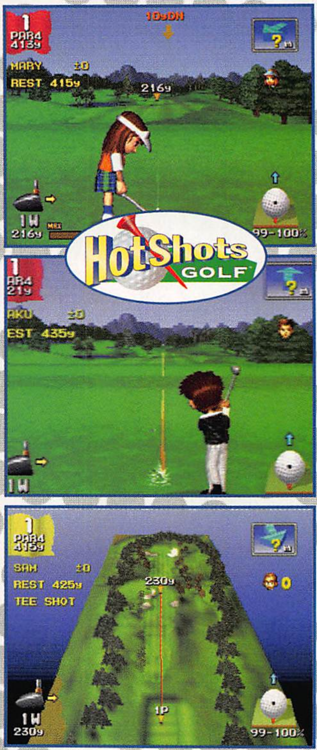


It's March, and you know what that means: Spring Training and the Final Four! Two of the most anticipated times in a true sports fan's calendar year (those that put down baseball should, as the commercial says, "Move to Norway") are here. Predictions are made and pools are started. What do I think? I think I should cut back on pools and make fewer predictions (although when both Stanford and the Red Sox shock the country, you can say you heard it here, first). Lucky for gamers, both of these momentous occasions are also being emulated on the home system. EA Sports will throw us into the excitement of March Madness, while Sony will allow us to make a run at the Pennant. Spring is in the air, and I'm thankful for that, because this has been a crappy winter in the golden state of California, and I need a tan.

El Nino

I just wanted to end by saying that Joe Kidd has moved on. After spending so much time criticizing the games and developers that make them, he has decided to put-up, or shut-up. The next time you see Joe Kidd's name, it will be attached to a sports game, near you. We, here, in the sports office, are all shedding a collective tear for our beloved number five. Let's just hope his games don't suck, so we won't have to shred them...

GAMEFAN Sports



HOT SHOTS GOLF

If there is one complaint I have as a sports editor, it is that there is little to no originality in the genre. Sure, developers will add something new, to each installment of their franchise, but the spirit of the game goes unchanged. True, you want your sports sims realistic, but it can wear on you...

Golf may be the leading offender in this area. Never have I seen so many uninspired golf titles flood the market. It's bad enough that there are too many options, but none seems to want to try anything new. What can you tell me that's changed, since the institution of the swing arc? Very little, friends, very little...



But wait... what's this? A refreshing, highly entertaining golf game, I see? Can't be; but it is. Sony will brighten up the doldrums with the most captivating golf title since the *PGA European Tour*, on the Genesis. The game is *Hot Shots Golf*, and it resembles a cross between NES *Golf* and the original, 16-bit, *Jack Nicklaus Golf*.

Check this out: multiple characters (no licenses, thankfully), including secret golfers, several beautiful courses, and the ability to unlock hidden contests, as well as power up your golfer with experience. Add to that stats, some really fast course generation, and you've got bliss. This is a golf title that all gamers will love, and it blows the competition away in stress-free replayability.

SPORTS VIEWPOINTS



Winter Heat
Sega Saturn
Sega
Olympic Games



As we near the Winter Olympics, fans of that event will have something to cheer about in *Winter Heat*, a frosty version of *Decathlete*. Workout your button-pressing muscles in 11 different events of the Track and Field variety. <tap> <tap> <tap> <tap> <tap> <tap> "AGHHH!!!" Personally, I'm not a fan of "button-mashing" games, although the selection of 11 different mini-games will amuse some people, I'm sure. If you're starving for a good sports game on the Saturn, look no further.

G	C	P	M	O	
7	8	8	7	8	84

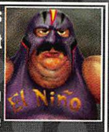


Sega's stellar sequel to *Decathlete* will keep your gaming parties exciting. A mind-numbing button smasher, *Winter Heat* scintillates in multi-player, but dies a horrible death as a single player game, due to its child-like difficulty. Mastering *Winter Heat* is easier than getting a hold of the Pamela/Tommy Lee video, and twice as enjoyable (I was not impressed by the video). A much needed addition for Sega's sports library.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	9	9	6	7	89

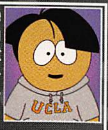


Newman Haas Racing
PlayStation
Psygnosis
Racing



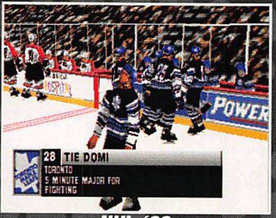
Another in a seemingly endless stream of racing sims. And, not unlike the majority of its brethren, *Newman Haas Racing* wallows in its own mediocrity. An average racing engine, coupled with average graphics and average sound, make this, well... just plain average. Don't get me started on the commentary...

G	C	P	M	O	
6	7	6	5	4	62

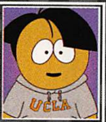


Ouch, the graphics in this game are not very appealing. Once you get over the initial shock of that and the comedic color commentary, you'll find a not-so-bad racing game with a ton of options. You can customize your car, driver, and other options such as assisted steering, braking, tire wear, damage, and crash spins, etc. The game is fun and the control is fine, until you collide with another car and go from 170 to 0 in a second. Huh?

G	C	P	M	O	
6	9	7	6	7	76

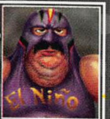


NHL '98
Sega Saturn
EA
Hockey



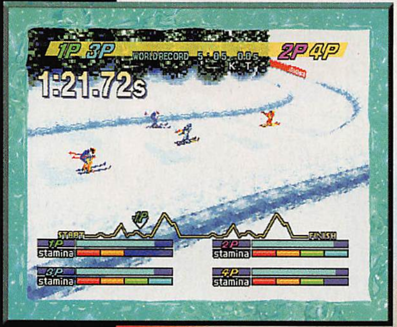
The Saturn version of *NHL 98* is virtually the same as the PlayStation version in every aspect but one: graphics, which is crucial. When the camera shows a closeup of a player's face, you'll see a blocky, poorly texture-mapped visage. The non-closeup players' bodies are also blocky and almost painful to look at. But if you can accept this part of the game, the rest is magic. The sounds and commentary are sweet; while the variety of different camera angles gives you the feeling that you're actually watching a game in progress.

G	C	P	M	O	
6	8	9	9	8	87



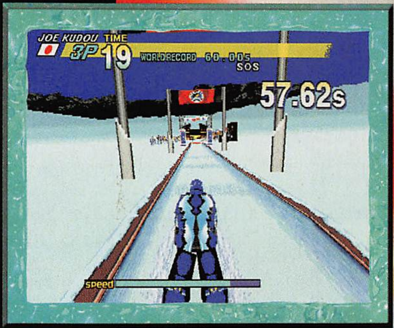
Not quite up to speed with its PlayStation counterpart, *NHL 98* on the Saturn, none-the-less performs competently. The graphics are shoddy and the engine is a tad slower, but the god-like sound and stat tracking are identical. Maybe not as good as *NHL All-Star Hockey*, but certainly a worthy purchase, for Saturn owners.

G	C	P	M	O	
5	8	8	10	7	84



Winter Heat

SEGA SPORTS





Welcome to the Wide World of Sega, where the agony of defeat is almost as much fun as the thrill of victory. A virtual defibulator for the dying system, *Winter Heat* gives the Saturn sports gamer one more reason to shell out some dough. What *Nagano* should have been, *Winter Heat* is the flipside to Sega's Olympic Coin; a perfect companion to the stellar *Decathlete*.

Right off, it is important to tell you what *Winter Heat* is NOT. *Winter Heat* is not a challenging one player game. If you are a loner or have trouble getting friends to play Saturn with you, forget about it. This game requires little skill to dominate the computer opponents. In fact, if you aren't shattering world records within the hour, it is safe to say that you suck at games. The only drive you may have to fly solo, is to hone your skills for when your buddies come over.

As a multi-player game, *Winter Heat* reigns supreme. Compete in eleven events ranging from speed skating and snowboarding, to ski jump and bobsled. There are eight athletes to choose from, each with unique abilities and event specialties. You are able to save all of your records, so everyone will always know who is the best.

What makes *Winter Heat* such a joy to play is the interface. Extremely easy to pick-up, anyone can be a competitor within no time. The pre-event tutorial will bring any newcomers, up to speed and the use of only a couple of buttons will make navigating the pad simple, even for non-gamers.



The graphics and sound of *Winter Heat* are top-notch. There is little polygon break-up, and the speed of the action is blistering. Each event has a world of sounds to heighten the experience, from the carving of ice to the sound of the wind in your ears. Not that you'll be able to hear it, over the din of you and your friends hooting and hollering.

Unparalleled multi-player fun, *Winter Heat* is a must in party situations. Replay value and level of challenge fall through the floor, though, the second you go solo, so don't come crying to me when you don't have anyone to play against.

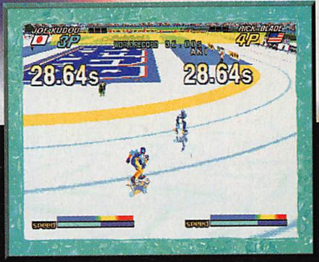
"Compete in eleven events ranging from speed skating and snowboarding, to ski jump and bobsled...











REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-4

DIFFICULTY - EASY

AVAILABLE - NOW



EL NINO
Don't get caught playing this alone.





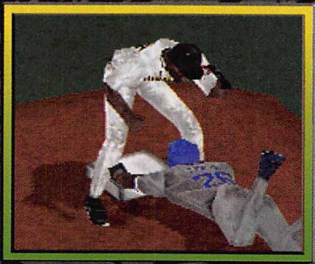
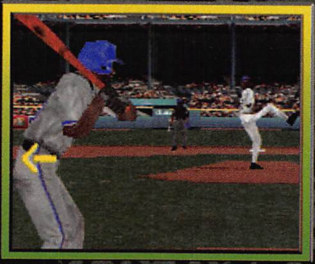

Triple Play 99

Yes, it is that time of year. Another *Triple Play* installment is ready to hit the shelves. Only a month or two away, the newest *TP* opus is a good reason to get excited. Having outdone themselves last year, the big question was whether or not they could top that; make a bigger, badder, more life-like sim.

The verdict is still out on whether or not *TP 99* has amped up the AI suitably, but from the looks... and sounds... of it, the other facets have been buffed to an even shinier finish.

There will be the addition of a Homerun Derby tournament mode, more color commentary, and a first person batting perspective (how useful that will be is anyone's guess). Not as though you need me to tell you, but there will also be the two expansion clubs, the Devil Rays and the DiamondBacks.

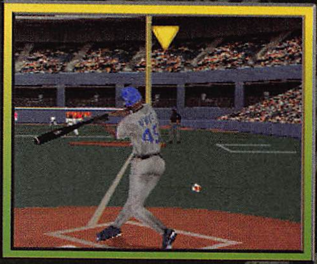
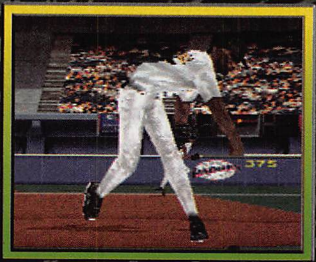
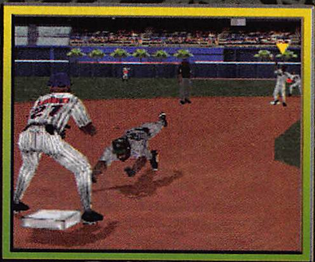
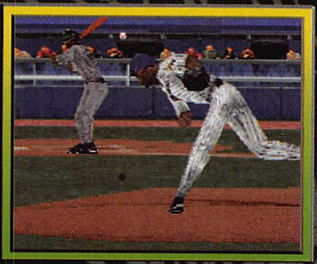
For those of you who are annoyed by defense, there will be an Offense Only mode and for those of you who are annoyed by english... there is a Spanish Only mode. The minor problem of multi-player season mode has been addressed, as well. Now, up to thirty participants can enter any single season.

How detailed will player attributes be? Can you believe that *Triple Play 99* will utilize 1300 stats to measure player ability. Every possible area of a player's ability can now be measured.

The biggest addition, though, is the Career Mode. You will now be able to guide a club through multiple seasons, accumulating stats and building your team into a contender. Talk about a major boost in replay value...

Expect to see *Triple Play 99* around the start of the '98 season. Next issue I'll tell you if all the hard work has paid off, even though I probably already know the answer to that (although look how wrong I was when I previewed *Nagano*. Ouch!).

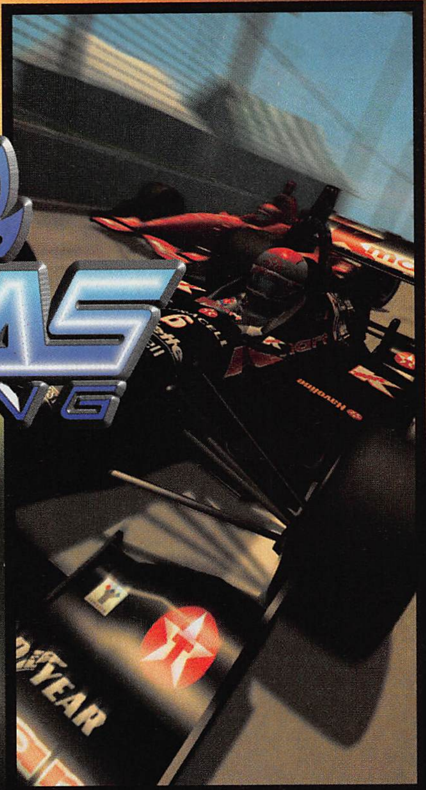
P PREVIEW | PlayStation

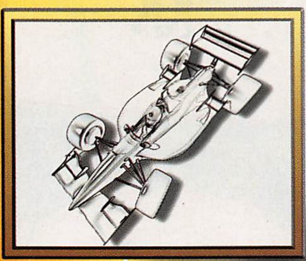
DEVELOPER - EA	# OF PLAYERS - 1-8
PUBLISHER - EA	DIFFICULTY - VARIABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - SPRING

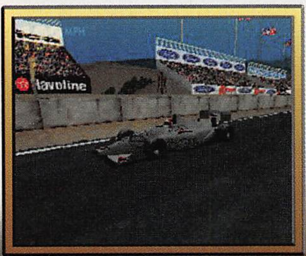


El Nino Looks like a back to back homer, for EA.

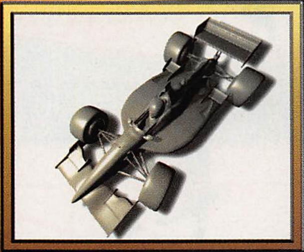
NEWMAN HAAS RACING

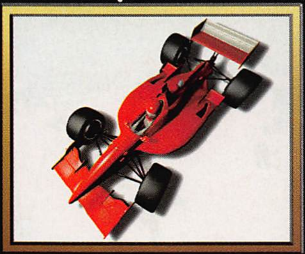














Judging by the seemingly endless stream of Formula One games coming out of Psygnosis and elsewhere, someone must like these games! To be perfectly honest, I am not one of them. I was unimpressed and bored by the first *F1* game, and I am as equally unimpressed with *Newman Haas Racing*, a CART aberration of the former title.

Newman Haas is the world-renowned racing team with ace driver, Christian Fittipaldi. Along with a slew of other familiar names (Andretti and Gordon, being two of them) Fittipaldi will test his meddle on 11 international speedways, ranging from the Milwaukee Mile in Wisconsin, to the Emerson-Fittipaldi Speedway in Rio.

Psygnosis' racing sims excel at offering all of the possible options, from tweaking your car's engine, to adjusting the resistance and tire style. *Newman Haas Racing* also includes on-the-fly pit stop choices, as well, cutting down on the amount of time you have to spend in the pit.

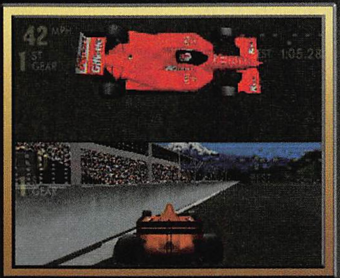
A point of boasting is the AI. Each driver has his own personality on the track, that resembles his real-life driving styles and techniques. Not that I could tell - and I challenge you to spot the difference; betcha can't. If this adds flavor to the game, it is about as potent as parsley flakes.

I just can't recommend this game. Having been spoiled by the likes of *Rave Racer*, *Grand Turismo*, and *Rally Cross*, I just can't get past the bland graphics and uninspired backgrounds. Helping to magnify the sub-par graphics is a bagful of standard racing sounds as well as some of the worst commentary in the history of yackety-yak. *Newman Haas* employs the voice talents of the ESPN/ABC team of Bobby Varsha and Danny Sullivan for this vocal catastrophe. One actually asks the other whether or not he would like a sandwich! I'm sure this was meant to be funny...

These two facets of the game would seem much less important if the racing engine were stellar. It is not. The developers may be able to defend the way the cars handle by saying that that is how real CART cars drive. I can't debunk that; I've never driven one. This point seems moot to me, however, because the control and on-track action still leave me feeling listless.

This is one sim you can do without.







R REVIEW

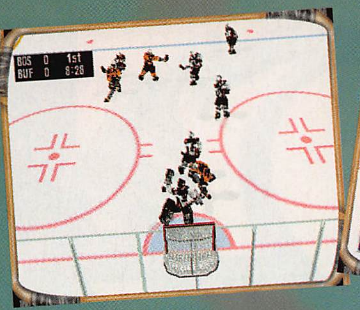
PlayStation

Developer - STUDIO 33
PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS
FORMAT - CD

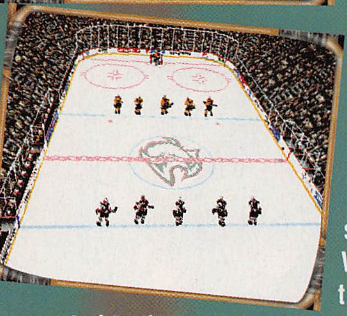
OF PLAYERS 1-2 SPLIT
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
AVAILABLE - MARCH



El Nino
Stalled out in the fast lane...






It is clear that EA considers Saturn its red-headed step-child. With few titles being converted to the system, and even fewer being any good, I knew that my time spent with *NHL 98* was probably going to be painful. Luckily, this is only half-true.

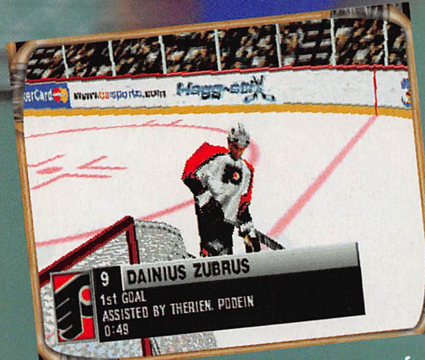
While *NHL 98*, for the Saturn isn't as sleek as its PlayStation counterpart, the tantamount control was, mercifully, left intact. Those of you who got a chance to play the god-like *NHL 98*, on the PlayStation, will be briefly shocked by the inferior graphics, but should have no problem looking past it to the top-notch sound (oh, how I love that commentary) and dead-on playability.

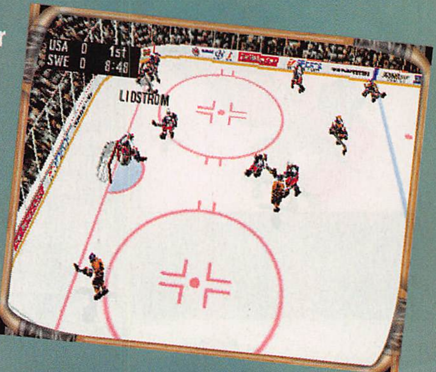
As if you really need me to tell you, *NHL 98* carries the full compliment of NHL teams, deep stat tracking and the ever-important user records. You've got the All-Star game, national teams and dozens of fan favorite musical pieces. If it's in the PlayStation version, it's here.

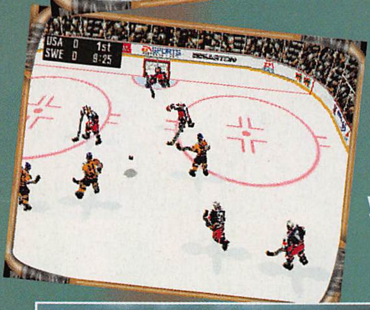
One thing that I didn't comment on, when reviewing *NHL 98*, on PlayStation, was the inclusion of sponsors. The NHL powers-that-be loosened up their reigns and allowed EA to scoop up real-life sponsors. I can't say how great that is. To see Sprite, Dodge, Pinnacle and Master Card tattooed all over the place gives *NHL 98* the atmosphere of being the real thing. Hopefully the likes of the MLB, NBA, and NFL will take heed and allow the same liberties. It is a great way for the developers to finance projects and it contributes to the realism of the game.

NHL 98 is a must for Saturn sports gamers. True, the graphics are sub-par (polygon break-up... ouch), when compared to its sister opus, but they still are a step above *NHL All-Star's*. The important thing is that the gameplay is intact and the revolutionary commentary is just as scintillating. Thank you EA.









GAMEFAN SPORTS — R REVIEW — SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - INTERPLAY	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - EA	DIFFICULTY - AVERAGE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



EL NINO
Any more real, and you'd have bruises.

MARCH MADNESS





"...Tim Duncan, Yolanda Griffith (Long Beach StingRays) and Kate Starbird (Seattle Reign) were used in the motion capturing..."





O.K., so they're no longer employing the Coach K license, but that doesn't mean that the game won't be as good. Although it's still far from complete, early opinions of this game can be formed.

At this point, the graphics don't look as clean as *Live's* and the motion capture isn't as extensive. The likes of Tim Duncan, Yolanda Griffith (Long Beach StingRays) and Kate Starbird (Seattle Reign) were used in the motion capturing, for those of you who still care about such things.

The one thing that you will always get from NCAA titles, is plenty of teams to choose from; *March Madness* is no exception. There are 108 Division I mens teams, and, as an added bonus, the developers have opted to include nine of DI's best women teams. Fight songs echo across authentic home courts and animated crowds writhe in excitement.

A nice touch is the inclusion of a Momentum Meter which gauges current home team momentum. If it lights all the way up, you'd better pray for the end of the quarter... or call a timeout in order to quell the crowd. The only way to bring it down, or reverse the momentum, is to score... a lot.

As far as other extras, you get several play modes, including Dynasty Mode, which allows you to play multiple seasons, giving you coaching options to create and groom superstars, while building a franchise. "Red Shirting" is an option.

The engine seems to differ little from *Live's*, which is a good thing. One button control that has caught our eye is the ability to press the circle button in order to take a charge. Certainly cuts down on your opponents ability to drive to the hoop...

March Madness 98 looks to be a super title, and will be hitting stores just in time for the real tourney.

GAMEFAN SPORTS — PREVIEW — PlayStation

DEVELOPER - EA	# OF PLAYERS 1-8
PUBLISHER -EA	DIFFICULTY -VARIABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE -MARCH



THE ROOKIE: IT'S NOT MARCH MADNESS WITHOUT VITALE!



Hot Shots Golf



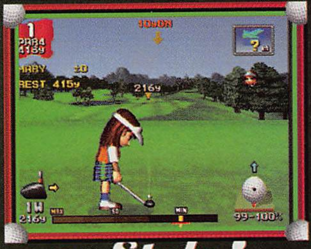
If there is one complaint I have, as a sports editor, it is that there is little to no originality in the genre. Sure, developers will add something new to each installment of their franchise, but the spirit of the game goes unchanged. True, you want your sports sims realistic, but it can wear on you...

Golf may be the leading offender, in this area. Never have I seen so many uninspired golf titles flood the market. It's bad enough that there are too many options, but none seems to want to try anything new. What can you tell me that's changed, since the institution of the swing arc? Very little, friends, very little...

But wait... what's this? A refreshing, highly entertaining golf game, I see? Can't be; but it is. Sony will brighten up the doldrums with the most captivating golf title since the *PGA European Tour*, on the Genesis. The game is *Hot Shots Golf*, and it resembles a cross between *NES Golf* and the original, 16-bit, *Jack Nicklaus Golf*.

Check this out: multiple characters (no licenses, thankfully), including secret golfers, several beautiful courses, and the ability to unlock hidden contests, as well as power up your golfer with experience. Add to that: stats, some really fast course generation, and you've got bliss. This is a golf title that all gamers will love and which blows the competition away in stress-free replayability.





Golf Japanese Style!





GAMEFAN SPORTS — PREVIEW — PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SCEA	# OF PLAYERS 1-4
PUBLISHER - SCEA	DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - MAY

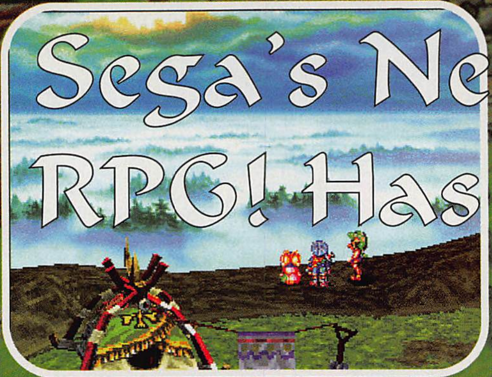


THE ROOKIE: THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A LITTLE STROKE PLAY


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STRATEGY GUIDE
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Sega's Newest Epic RPG! Has Arrived!

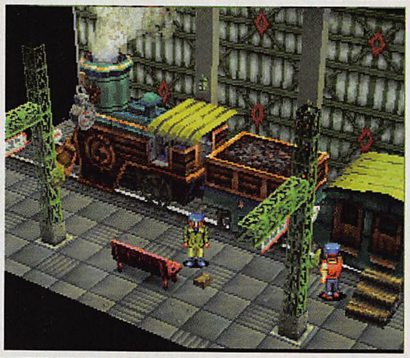




Justin

グランディア

GRANDIA









When the battle of the 'next-gen' consoles officially comes to a close, which system will be hailed as the victor in the RPG wars? Most will immediately jump up and scream "PlayStation!" but the answer isn't really that cut and dry. Most people would base that on one game: *Final Fantasy VII.* And while it is a very solid title, it isn't the revelation many purported it to be ("100+?!", ⁘…sigh…⁘). In fact, I'm willing to bet that if US gamers are given the chance to experience Game Arts latest, *Grandia*, they may actually change their tune (and actually sell a few thousand Saturns in the process). "Why?" you ask - well, simply because it is one of the single most stunning pieces of software ever created; right there with other next-generation legends including *Super Mario 64* and *NiGHTS*. This is Game Art's finest hour and simply put, one of the greatest games of all time.

Now, generally speaking, I'm not one given to wild bursts of hyperbole (an occasional, ugly bout is all), but in this case it's hard not to be totally and completely overwhelmed when something this fantastically brilliant comes along; it's rare enough in other mediums such as movies and books. And brilliant is a perfect way to describe this rare jewel. Some other adjectives that might do it justice: epic, imaginative, stupendous, revolutionary, awe-inspiring, etc. If you prefer, we also have the *GameFan*-ism library: joyful, rockin', eye-flaying, super-skilled, blissful and "RESPECT!" quoth the Enquirer (⁘…sniff…⁘, I miss that

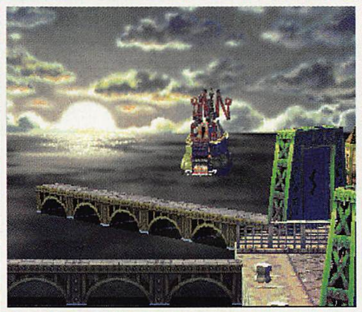


Sue

Breathtaking environments!!











kerazy guy). Even Skills MacGregor and Two Scoopz had to take a break from their strict regimen of fighting games to give this one a go. Oh, and remember back when we reviewed the import *FFVII*, how it was compared to such things as penicillin and other lofty human achievements? Well *Grandia* is of a caliber to rival such trivial things and resides among the gods (OK, maybe that's going a little overboard, but humor me).

The story itself is cut from the same mold as *Lunar: Silver Star Story* (which US Saturn owners will never see …urgh…). Whereas most RPG's take themselves WAY too seriously, the designers and writers over at Game Arts decided to take a different approach (and I don't mean in a Working Designs sense). Those of you looking for your traditional, 'serious till your little desensitized mind snaps' angle will get no satisfaction here. In fact, maybe the best way to



















グランディア

GRANDIA



Sega gives the hardcore RPG fans a little bonus! With the game, also comes a CD single of Grandia's Main Theme! Also a "handkerchief" of the World Map, which this lovely background was made with. Sorry! Available in Japan only...

describe the feel of the story is whimsical; not in a negative sense, though. Justin is a youth roaming the streets of Parm, searching for something a little more exciting than his mundane, day-to-day existence. From getting bonked on the head each time he stops by home to escaping from jail using the old "I'm hurt, please help me" trick and actually playing a mini-game that involves swabbing the decks of a ship, this game is whimsical, wonderful fun. The key here is that although there is a main quest that needs solving, there are many smaller quests of seeming little importance that wind up adding up to your standard 'save the world' ideals - and each and every one is amazingly enjoyable with never a dull moment. The main quest involves saving the world from the evil machinations of Barl and resurrecting the lost city of Alent, and while that may sound a bit cliched, the way it's handled certainly is not.

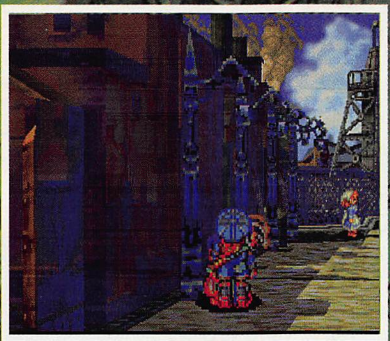


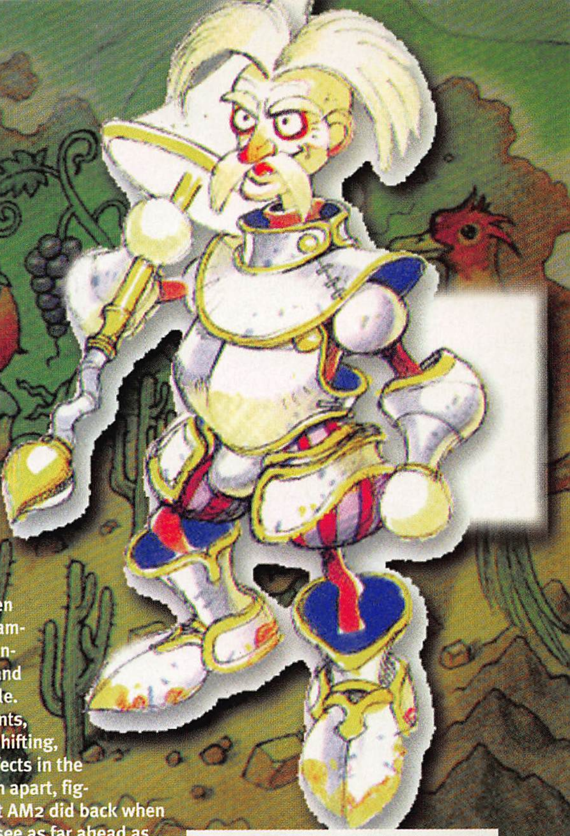
Gameplay is relatively standard RPG fare: Roam around towns and across countryside's gaining experience, collecting clues and fighting massive quantities of beasts all in the hopes of completing the quest. Control is a breeze, with the L and R buttons handling camera rotation as well as the standard confirm, cancel, and item-access buttons. For the most part, it's straightforward with an intuitive interface and well put together item screens. Combat is a mix of various styles from previous RPG's and includes the 'free-roaming' that many loved from the *Lunar* series. Instead of sitting in position and attacking thin air, all the characters run up and perform them 'physically.' At times, battles can become extremely frenetic with multiple characters beating on several enemies all at the same time.

The graphics in *Grandia* are a revelation. The sprite-based character graphics mesh wonderfully with the absolutely seamless 3D elements. For the most part, there is very little 'cut-and-paste' type effects going on (which tends to plague games of this type - *Xenogears*, for instance), and they allow a terrific range of emotion; especially









when coupled with on-screen portraits for 'major' characters (much like the *Shining* series of games). As for the rest of the visuals, most Saturn owners loathe the phrase, "Wow, I can't believe this is a Saturn game," in reference to the fact that they are stunned that it is capable of generating truly astounding 3D graphics; I've been known to administer savage beatings to PS-heads who say this every time a Saturn game with great 3D graphics comes along - which happens quite a bit, thank you very much. This time out, though, I'm inclined to agree with all the naysayers. You simply have never seen anything like this on Saturn; perhaps not even on Sony's 3D beast. From the moment the game first boots up, and the flyby into Parm commences, you know you're seeing something special. And while that initial sequence may leave you awe-stricken and in need of a fresh pair of pants, it's only the slightest taste of what's yet to come. Beautiful, absolutely seamless polys scroll by at frame rates from the low 20's (the flyby) to a solid, screaming 30 (in the more closed, dungeon environs). Everything in the game (outside of the characters) is rendered in 3D polygons. From brooms and coat racks, to giant construction vehicles and ships, all of it is truly 3D and can be viewed from almost any angle. At times the camera will dip to ground level and allow peeks far into the distance; usually only at key storypoints, but sometimes just to show off! And amazingly, despite the huge number of polygons this game is obviously shifting, there is no breakup whatsoever. The VDP2 processor is again called in to flex its might with amazing water effects in the port areas and seamless 'floors' upon which all the areas are built on. It seems that Game Arts took the Saturn apart, figured out exactly what it was geared to do best and implemented just about everything flawlessly; kind of what AM2 did back when Virtua Fighter 2 was the pinnacle of Saturn coding. The only negative would be the fact that you can't always see as far ahead as you might like. Obviously this is a sacrifice to keep the frame rate acceptably high, but it would have been nice to have had complete control to place the camera in any position; this is about the only negative in the entire game. There are also some hot CG and animation sequences before and after numerous key events - full screen for the most part and some are awe-inspiring; not that I should have been that surprised given the amazing FMV in *Lunar* and *Gun Griffon*.

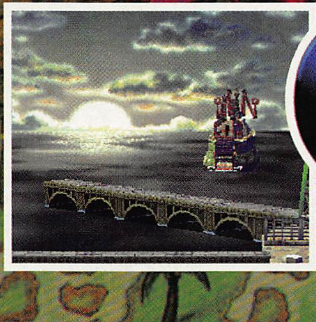
The battle graphics are handled *Lunar*-style, within a pseudo-3D arena. Combat resembles a cross between the graphics of *Suikoden* (poly environs/sprite characters) and the roaming around of *Lunar* (walking up and smiting enemies). Spell effects are mesmerizing, and although they don't reach the eye-searingly vivid heights of *FFVII*, they're also entirely real-time generated-no rendered footage here.



Aurally, the game's soundtrack is in the same class as the luscious graphics. Soaring symphonies, heart-rending melodies, and even 'The Wedding March' performed by Zamfir (well, it sounds like the master of the Pan flute). The composition is beautiful and the music matches the game every [illegible] of the way from the first note to the final melody.

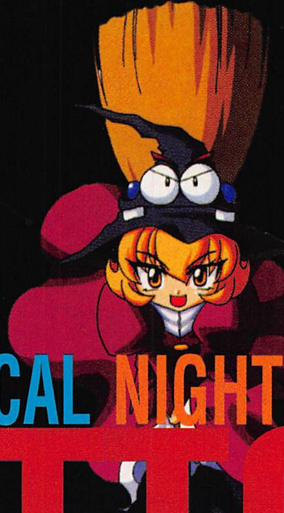
I desperately wish I could ramble non-stop for the length of this magazine about how brilliant and incredible this game is. I wish I could describe the story in intricate detail (though I'm still praying for an English version), but that may ruin it for some of you. However, all of that will have to wait until another time (c'mon Sega!). Suffice it to say, if you buy only one import ever, make it this one. Even if you don't know a shred of Japanese there are a ton of web sites out there with walkthroughs and plot translations (special thanks to http://lunarnet.simplenet.com/esoft/grandia.htm who doesn't know just how helpful his initial 'plot synopsis' was). Games like this (especially RPG's) come along about once every three or four years - Don't let this one get away; you'll regret it for the rest of your days.













MAGICAL NIGHT DREAMS
COTTON 2





While the US shooter scene remains in a coma trapped beneath the crushing weight of innumerable 3D platformers, 3D fighters, and countless more polygon putrescence, Japan continues to place this genre on the pedestal it deserves, far above the thronging, lusting masses. *Cotton 2* is one of the more recent releases on Sega's ST-V arcade system which is essentially a Saturn with a heaping helping of extra RAM to allow for more detailed animation and such. Based on the original *Cotton* which appeared on Mega Drive, SuFami, and PC Engine in various incarnations, this one is set to take all import-aware buyers by storm. And let's face it: At this point, if you own a Saturn, you had better be most aware.

The play mechanics in *Cotton 2* are actually a little more evolved than your typical power-up and kill-em-all shooter. Cotton is capable of snagging enemies and flinging them at the rest of the misbegotten bunch. And while this is an interesting addition, that's only scratching the surface. See, along with being able to bag an enemy, Cotton also possesses the ability to trap a foe in a globe of conjured energy, provided she has one of three types of magic in her inventory. Once the required crystals are collected, the enemy-capture technique comes into play: She encases a beastie in a field of energy by performing *SF*-esque motions, then grabs and hurls it at other enemies collecting 'links.' Each link builds up energy in the ball and when it's finally hurled off-screen or left on the ground for too long it releases the pent up force. Grabbing the stored energy will up your shot levels as is often the case in shooters.

While the rest of the world is caught up in the graphic force that is *Einhander*, with all its flashy polys and light-sourced shenanigans *Cotton 2* relies on something a little less technologically advanced. Now relax, I know what you're thinking: "How can a game that doesn't have any polygons be good?! I mean, is that actually possible?!"—I know it's hard to believe, but it's true; I promise. This game is an entirely hand-crafted, sprite-based work of art. Marvel as Cotton cruises across the screen in beautifully vivid color and astounding animation. Quake in fear as Treasure-inspired, multi-joined bosses fill the screen with rippingly clean detail and inspiring animation. No worries about seams, glitching or any of the countless other things that generally terrorize polygonal games like Kid Fan at an all-you-can-eat buffet. Just beautiful color, artwork, and 99% slowdown-free graphics; something you certainly can't say about *Einhander* and *Raystorm* (or Layer Section 2).

So, while our Nihonjin compatriots revel in the glory of all that is mindless destruction, we have to sit and wring our hands in frustration. Seeing as how Sega has pretty much dropped off the face of the earth for the foreseeable future (most of this year, until a certain keen blade or whatever they're calling it this week makes an appearance) there is a chance somewhere between zero and 'are you out of your bloody mind?!' Thus this receives the ECM seal of Ultimate Approval thereby making your next step a stop at your local importer or Internet mail order company. Don't let this one fly by!-ECM









P PREVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SUCCESS
PUBLISHER - SUCCESS
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

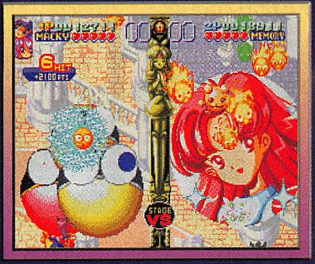


ECM: COME TAKE A MAGIC BROOMSTICK RIDE WITH ME



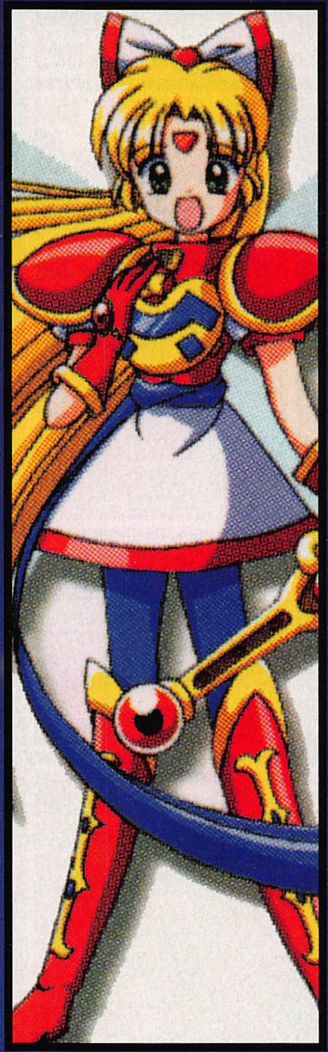






Twinkle ★ Star Sprites





ADK has a long history of essentially being another fighting game producer for the SNK Neo-Geo behemoth that helped keep that system mired in mediocrity. These were the fellows that brought you *Agressors of Dark Combat* and the *World Heroes* series of games. Now I know some of you are wincing in pain (at least I hope you are), but let me lay your fears to rest: This actually **isn't** a fighting game. Nope, no Rasputin, Dragon or any of those other wacky fighting game character designs that only one friend, with a bizzare fixation on Dr. Who, ever liked (and we all know somebody like that...ugh). In fact, this is a shooter—something the Neo desperately needed more of over the course of its nine year life span (I can only play *Pulstar*, *Metal Slug*, and *Last Resort* so many times). And being the shooter freak (and god) that I am, I took to Twinkle Star Sprites like Eggo to anything South Park related (he even had a holiday visit from Mr. Hankey, "Hidey-Ho, Eggo, you sure do smell an awful lot like flowers"). Oh, and those with an aversion to hyper-cute Japanese characters should stay **FAR** away.

Twinkle Star Sprites is a split-screen vertically scrolling shooter with cuteness to burn. The display is split vertically down the middle of the screen with one window for your character and another for whatever enemy you're facing; be it human or computer. Essentially it plays a lot like a shooter with *Puyo-Puyo* elements thrown in—not a bad mix, in my humble opinion. You take the role of any number of characters in the Vs mode and 'fight' round after round against various enemies like cats, big-breasted women, and other furry critters. By destroying foes in traditional shooter style you send bolts over the split that will cause your foe nothing but more headaches, much like sending rocks over in *Puyo-Puyo*. Better yet, after powering up your super-bar at the bottom of the screen you can charge it up and send a boss after your foe. It's quite a sight seeing panda bears beat down enemies in a last ditch effort on your part; satisfying too.

Basically what we have here is a very solid, graphically decent game that's a blast in two-player mode. I had an especially good time repeatedly smashing Mr. SNK (that's Shidoshi) and reducing him to a wailing, crying wreck. Oh, and if you're still on the fence about this one it also comes with a second disk with lots of extra goodies, such as an art gallery. That about says it all, so get blasting. Just be sure to only imbibe measured amounts each session: the cuteness can lead to brain damage and hair loss...
—ECM







R REVIEW | SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - ADK	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - ADK	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

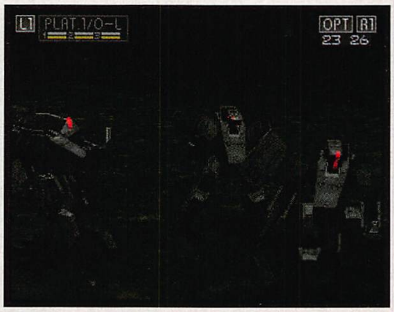


ECM
When you wish upon a star!

FRONT MISSION ALTERNATIVE

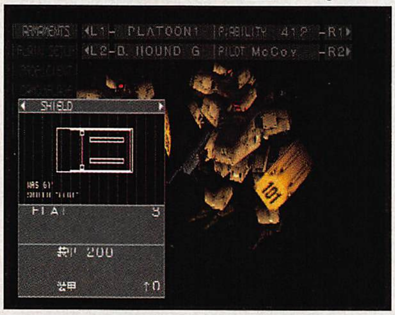


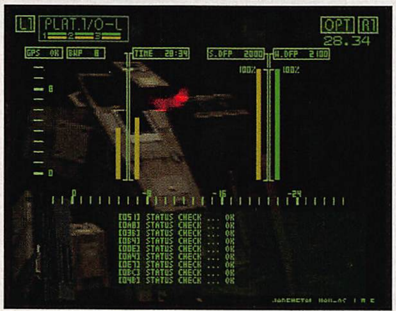




I've been waiting a long time for this... Non Stop Simulation. *Front Mission Alternative*, Square's latest addition to the popular *Front Mission* series, is now available in Japan , and it has me curious. Flip through the manual and about halfway through is the now well known expression (for those who frequently peruse the Japanese gaming publications that is) "WARGASM" followed by "Sex, Drug, Alternative." Fine, I'll give it a go. Sounds cool... Skip the splendor of the game for now; on to the weapon upgrades. By the time I reached Mission 6, I realized that every weapon was a metaphor (what for I will leave to your own interpretation). Let's see... You can equip your main arm with a Whang, Bushbeater, Dingus, Ramrod, or Dork. How about a rear-mounted weapon? You start with a Whopper which can be elevated to a Blue Veiner, Staff, or even a large Prod, Wick, or Boner. Perhaps "Non Stop Stimulation" is a better sub-title? Regardless, bend me an ear and I'll let you know how it plays.







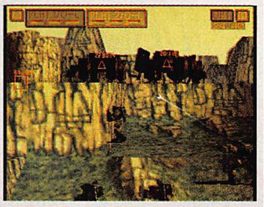
Put simply, FMA is a not quite real-time, not quite turn-based mech war strategy game. I'll be the first to admit that the first three stages are way too slow (almost causing me to pull my hair out), but beyond that, the game seriously picks up in the pace department.

Although you tell your mech platoons what to do and then watch as the action transpires, you can change their directives at any moment (retreat, maneuver offensively or defensively, move to a different way-point, attack a different enemy faction, etc.). This unique gameplay style, along with an excellent 3D engine (with full control over the camera) to portray the battles in, provides for an experience unlike any other on the PlayStation (think turn-based *Armored Core* and you should have a good idea).



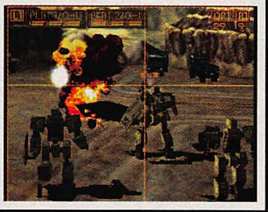




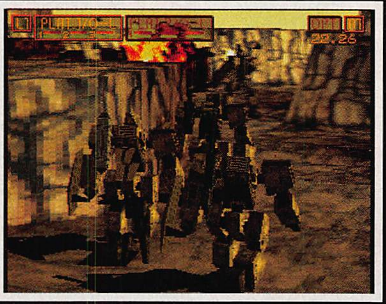




Technically, *FMA* is damn good. Although the engine suffers of minor slowdown here and there, the frame rate never dips too low, the environments are huge, and there is plenty of eye-candy as well (light-sourcing, transparencies, blurring, lens-flare... the standard PSX lot these days). The music is a tad Casio, but I can deal; besides, I just turn down the volume when annoyed. The interface is pretty technical (to a sim-buff's pleasure), and thanks to Square, the import version has a feature that allows you to change the language to English (the way it should be!) which makes things MUCH more playable.



I am totally into this game and I highly recommend it to anyone interested in both strategy games and action games. As I mentioned, it is unlike any other PSX title out there and if you have the patience to get through the first three missions, you should enjoy it thoroughly. And although there are periods here and there where you have to travel for a while to reach the enemy, overall the game balances out well because the battles get pretty challenging later on. Without knowledge of Japanese text, the only thing you will miss is the story, which I can live without for now.



P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER -SQUARE
PUBLISHER -SQUARE
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS -1
DIFFICULTY -ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE -NOW JAPAN

?

????????: MUST FIND AND DESTROY STATION DAVE











Wait a minute... Can it be true? *Tomba*, a strongly Japanese action/platformer developed by Whoopee Camp, is coming to American soil this Fall? *Tomba*? A stumpy, pink hair wearin', saber-toothed caveman who must save his homeland from the clutches of evil... pigs!?!? Have the folks at Sony lost their minds... or found them? Somewhere beneath all of the unwritten policies depicting our so called 'cultural gaming disparities' it appears, my fellow import players, they have found them. Or maybe, just maybe, those disparities are fading entirely. Well, the decision certainly surprised me (and just about the entire GF staff!), and if this kind act is any indication of Sony's future proceedings, then we should all be a happier bunch in the years to come.

Thanks Sony, on to the game. First of all, if you are an import buyer and are thinking about grabbing your own copy now, I have one mention of warning—unless you know how to read Japanese well, you'll be playing the guessing game a lot. There's loads of text to be interpreted and most of it describes what you need to do to progress through the game. But, for other reasons, you may want to pick it up regardless. *Tomba* has gobs of gameplay. Although the mechanics are not hugely original, there is just so much to do here that it never has a chance to be considered old-school. Perhaps "every school that ever was" is a better way to put it. Swing, jump, toss pigs, throw a boomerang, slide, climb, open chests, rescue lost children, save frogs, eat 'shrooms, ride boats, rescue a band of dwarves... Additionally, as you play, you find all kinds of items which can be accessed via an inventory screen. Weapons, magic items, keys, power-ups... a long list of goods which again adds to the depth.



OK, now let's talk about mushrooms. My favorite stage so far is a mushroom-laden landscape filled with brightly colored backgrounds and a deranged collection of botanical nightmares (see screen shots). When Tomba eats a 'shroom, he and all of the plants around him either suffer a bad trip and cry like a tot in need of a diaper change, or enjoy a good trip and can't stop laughing. When the plants are having a good time, they become firm and raise certain portions of earth beneath them making certain platforms reachable. Vice versa for a bad trip: The plants droop and sob, turning the level a bit soggy resulting in certain platforms lowering. But while tripping, Tomba is debilitated and he bursts out in fits of laughter or crying at random; leaving you rather helpless at times when being attacked. That's when you chow down an antidote 'shroom. Pretty original eh?

Graphically, *Tomba* is much like *Klonoa* (although it maintains a frame rate of 30 fps vs. *Klonoa*'s 60 fps). The engine shifts a nice blend of polys and sprites, and Tomba can move in and out of the backgrounds at certain spots (you have push up or down on the d-pad to find out if he can—similar to Hercules) which adds more depth to the playfield.

To sum things up here, I think it's safe to say that bringing *Tomba* to the States is an admirable move by Sony, and it means that we will have another excellent action/platform game on PlayStation. It really is nice to see this type of 2D action/platform game (although it tends to be just a tad too cute for me) coming to our side of the videogaming world. If you just can't wait to toss pigs and eat 'shrooms, you may want to grab the import and trudge through, but I still recommend that you wait on this one. Look for progress updates in further issues of GF, but for now, enjoy these shots!



TOMBA

R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER -WHOOPEE CAMP	# OF PLAYERS -1
PUBLISHER -SONY	DIFFICULTY -MEDIUM
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE -3rd QUARTER



MR. GOO
UNGH BUNGH?



幻世虚構 精霊機導弾
ELEMENTAL GEARBOLT

Well, I was going to start this article by bitching about how cool Japanese games like this never make it to the US, but I've just learned that Working Designs are planning on bringing *Elemental Gearbolt* to the States. So there goes that idea. *Elemental Gearbolt* is a fantasy themed first person 'gun game' from the creators of *Horned Owl* (SCE). Wait! Don't the turn the page! *EG* is a lot better than *Horned Owl*, I promise. The premise is the same (on-rails blasting action) but everything else is a significant improvement.

The graphics are an effective mixture of polygonal backgrounds and sprite enemies (with the occasional polygonal enemy and boss thrown in for good measure) and while things can get a bit pixelly at times (the 2D enemies look dated), the overall effect is good. The art direction is impressive, the theme is appealing and the frame rate is super smooth generating a really fluid feeling of movement. Plus, the characters you play are winged female warriors, so your path isn't always ground based. As with all good gun games the action is thick and fast, and believe it or not there's even a 'little' strategy hidden beneath the basic shooting. You have three different types of shot that can be selected at any time, and certain types are more effective for certain areas than others (although the main single shot weapon is good for most of the game). Also, at the end of each level you are given the option to trade in points for experience (and thus more health). Beginners will want to go for the health, but as you get better you'll want to keep the points to bolster your hi-score.

EG is pretty short and not particularly tough either. With only six levels, and a fine tuned score accumulation system, the emphasis is definitely on mastering the game as opposed to merely beating it. Fine by me, but if you're the kind of gamer who considers a game 'finished' when the end credits role you're going to feel a little short changed. Since *EG* is now coming to these shores, I'd better save the rest of my comments for the final American review. K



P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SCE
PUBLISHER - SCE
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1 - 2
DIFFICULTY - EASY
AVAILABLE - DECEMBER



KNIGHTMARE
Three cheers for WD!

CRITICAL BLOW



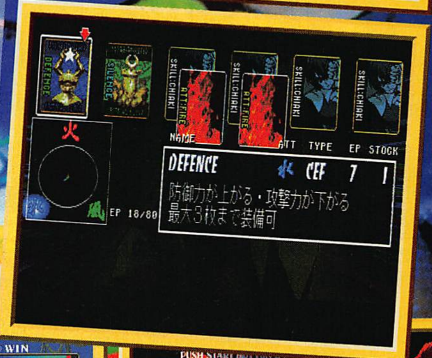












Any modern 3D fighter needs to distinguish itself from the pack in some way or another to even warrant a cursory look in today's crowded market. *Critical Blow* from Racdym (never hoid of em) and Banpresto is a perfect example of some gameplay ingenuity saving what would be considered a merely passable and forgettable one-on-one polygonal fighter.

Let's begin with the characters. You've got your standard nine along with a couple of boss characters representing the usual range of styles, from the incredibly SNK-like Chiaki (Shidoshi's pick, of course) to the Jack-like Reymond. Moves are combination of *SF*-style fireballs and dragon punches with some *VF*-ish PPK combos thrown in for good measure. You can even jump in to start combos, unlike many 3D fighters. In this respect the gameplay is fairly decent, if uninspired. You've seen everything before, from the double fireball supers to the flashing power bar "Critical Blow" finishes.

Graphically, *CB* is a slight underperformer. The characters, though benefiting from nice-looking motion, are rendered kind of ugly by low poly count and questionable design. And while some 3D backdrops are clever (being atop a moving train springs to mind), they too suffer from rather lackluster execution and polish.

What sets *CB* apart from the crowd is its engaging Trading mode. Here, you compete against the computer to gain access to all manner of different cards which give your character new abilities. You get cards which will increase your defense or even give you access to other characters' special moves. There are also fire, water, and wind cards which can, for istance, turn one of your special attacks into a flaming one. The cool thing is you can save your powered-up fighter onto a memory card and take it over to a friend's and kick the crap out of their so-called fighter. The loser even has to give up one of his cards in defeat. This adds a huge amount of playability and competitiveness to an otherwise by-the-numbers fighter.

The inclusion of a mildly diverting story and tournament mode further increase the perceived value of this decent fighter, and you could do far worse in picking out a fun two-player game. No word on a US release, so if you see it discounted at an import shop, you might want to check it out. It's not bad. ***SD***









R REVIEW

PlayStation

- DEVELOPER - RACDYM
- PUBLISHER - BANPRESTO
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1-2
- DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
- AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



P RATT: "KWITICAL BWOH!"

WOLFINGER'S WALL

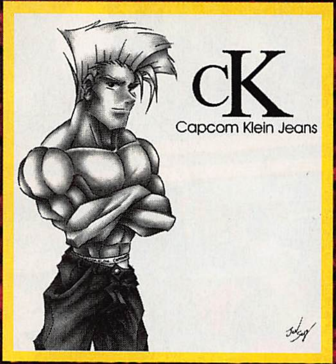
BACK AGAIN!

Hello, and welcome to another addition of The Wall ! It's the place where all you aspiring artists get a piece of the action. Unfortunately, we are not able to give out prizes this month, (E. Storm left with all the Ninja Scrolls) but you do get to see your work published in our brilliant mag. (and that should be prize enough right there!) Hey, we're trying. So until then, keep the blazing art coming in and I'll do my best to get it seen by all our fans out there.

Send Entries to: Wolfingers Wall, c/o GameFan Magazine,
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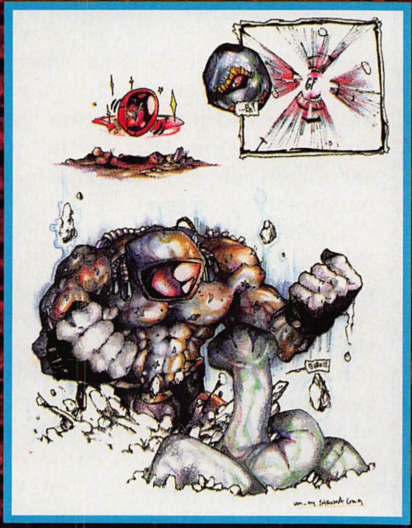
** All enties will not be returned unless enclosed with a S.A.S.E. and a small xylophone and a live Tuna.*

SPOTLIGHT!





Once again, the lovely and talented Jen Seng of Westborough,MA sends some very cool Guile Fetish Art (GFA). But we love her here and hope the art never stopps coming.



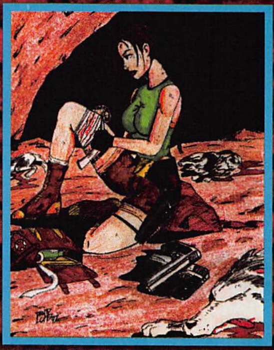
Stewart M. Craig of Provo, Utah, pens and inks us this awsome and completely menacing Monitaur. Nice job, but... why's he fighting a snake?



This great "GF Tribute" comes from Harry & Ira all the way from Medan, Indonesia. Wow! We are honored. I think you got the whole staff in there, too (past and present) . It's nice to know we have touched so many...and all without washing our hands.Ha!



The Postmeister in one of his more docile moods, as dipicted by Mark R. Whelan of Decorah, IA. The young boy seems to have upset Posty tremendously. Cool pose and nice rendering.
DISGRUNTLE POWER!



Ahh...Lara Croft patchin' up her owies after a hard day killing puppies and kitties. It's a tough job being a Tomb Raider. Some fine work by David Lopez of Bell Gardens, CA.





And in this corner we have Mai and Andy from Fatal Fury fame. It's a really fun style Ken Siu-Chong of Ont., Canada has going on here. Cool stuff!



Truth be told, Sohryu Asuka Langley is far, far superior over that Ayanami Rei...

AnimeFan



Pulp

Viz Comics

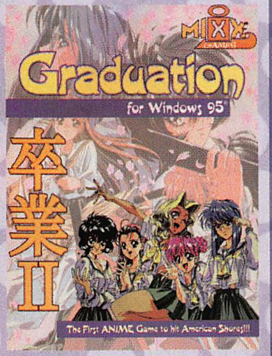
When you hear the words "Adult Manga," what do you think of? Graphic violence and tons of sex? Well, while that may be true, there is also a wide variety of manga out there that is mature and "adult" while still having a great deal of class, taste, and intelligence - and Viz Publications is looking to prove that with their new monthly manga anthology, Pulp. Pulp, "Manga for Grownups" is a collection of mature stories dealing with many different aspects of our lives - romance, sexuality, violence, survival, and good old "naughty humor." Five manga series are collected in this publication - Strain, Banana Fish, Heartbreak Angels, Dance 'Till Tomorrow, and Black & White. As well, Pulp contains a number of features and regular sections, include profiles of manga artists, a look at Japanese pop culture, reviews of Japanese bands and musicians, and news from the Japanese underground. All of these things, when thrown together with the different manga titles, produce a nice little publication that adds to the growing trend of manga anthologies here in the United States (anthologies are staples of everyday life in Japan, and it's nice to see more of them pop up over here). Pulp is indeed intended for adult readers, but don't fret - it's overall rather tame, and certainly more "mature" than offensive or degrading. - Shidoshi



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Graduation

MixxGames



If there is one genre of games that has, so far, been completely overlooked in the US, it is the "Simulation" line. Now, I don't mean war sim games like Command & Conquer and Warcraft - but those kooky Japanese sim games that cover everything from finding a girlfriend to teaching school to running your own convenience mart. Some of these games have actually become somewhat well known in the US, despite their lack of domestic versions - Tokimeki Memorial (or TokiMemo), Sakura Taisen, and Princess Maker are three such games that have achieved a sort of cult status in America. The problem has been that, up until recently, no one was really willing to attempt to bring these games out over here, as it was just automatically assumed that US gamers wouldn't give them a second look. That's where MixxGames come in. If you're into anime at all, by now you're sure to be familiar with MixxZine, a rather new bi-monthly manga anthology that includes titles like Magical Knight Rayearth and Sailor Moon. Now, Mixx is branching off into the world of gaming with their first title, Graduation. In Graduation, you take up the role of a teacher who must guide his five female students along the road to a proper education, and finally, graduation. You decide what subjects to teach, what areas each student should concentrate on, what they should do in their free time, and everything else a teacher who seems a little TOO involved in his student's lives should. If you own a Win95 compatible machine, get yourself a copy of Graduation and help support MixxGames in their crusade to bring more of these types of games to the US! - Shidoshi







Welcome...

...to the all new (and possibly improved, but who am I to say) AnimeFan. Just as the torch was passed on to many before me, so too has it landed in my hands. I'm sure many of you aren't really familiar with me, because my presence in the mag has been rather limited over the course of my stay here at GF (unless you're always one to check out any SNK reviews, and have come to know me as the resident NeoFreak). My work has mostly been on the Internet version of GameFan, but I'm one of the biggest fans of anime here in the office, so I promise to do my best to bring you the latest and greatest from the world of anime and manga.

As I'm sure you can tell by now, I've worked to expand AnimeFan, giving coverage to more and different areas than we have in the past. Don't worry, AnimeFan's trademark reviews will still be a main feature of the section, but I also hope to bring you news and updates concerning future products and projects, features on anime goods and cool collectables, expanded coverage of the US manga market, and anything else that I think will be interesting or exciting for all you loyal readers out there.

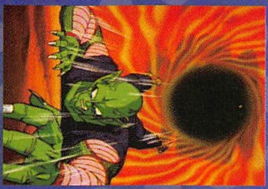
The most important thing is finding out what you think. What would you like to see in AnimeFan? What do you think I should add, change, get rid of? What products or sections should I feature? Or, just send in your thoughts (or artwork) on anime and manga in general - I'm thinking of adding a letters section to AnimeFan (albeit a SMALL one), and to do so I need letters. So speak up!

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ALL HELL'S BREAKING LOOSE...
POLTERGEIST REPORT
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*Suggested retail prices. Prices slightly higher in Canada. Color. Stereo. 90 minutes. Supernatural Action/Adventure. Unrated. Contains violence. Parental discretion advised. ©1997 TOHO, Studio Pierrot and MOVIC. All rights reserved. The "YUYU HAKUSHO" characters are owned and controlled by Yoshihiro Togashi/Shueisha, Fuji Television and Studio Pierrot. Company spokes mecha M.D. Geist appears courtesy of Nippon Columbia. U.S. Manga Corps, Mangamania and logos are registered trademarks of Central Park Media Corporation. All rights reserved.





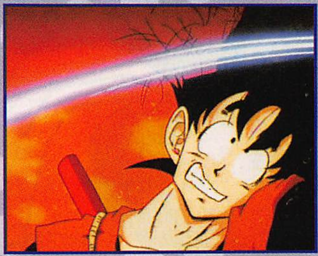


Dragon Ball Z the Movie : Dead Zone DVD

Dual / Pioneer Anime



If you're a fan of Japanese animation, I'm willing to bet you hold one of two opinions of DragonBall Z; you either see it as an epic tale of the struggle between good an evil, a battle that wages on across time and space... or you see it as a neverending fight between beings that are way too powerful for their own good, who, when on the brink of defeat, scream for five minutes and explode in a blinding flash of energy which turns the tide just like that, and you can't understand how someone could enjoy watching such anime (as for me, I've seen the fury of DBZ fans scorned, so I'm smart enough not to say either way). In the case that you are indeed a big Toriyama fan, you're in luck. DragonBall Z the Movie : Dead Zone has been brought to DVD thanks to Pioneer, and I'm sure that you will have



never seen your favorite anime look or sound as good as this. Dead Zone (an uncut theatrical movie) is the story of the kidnapping of Son Goku's son, Gohan, and an evil plot to take over the world by joining together the seven Dragon Balls - both plans the handiwork of the evil Garlic Jr. The story of the rescue of Gohan, and the entire world itself, is brought to life spectacularly on DVD - I've been spreading the word about this new video format, and once again it proves why it's so good. The animation is crisp, clear, and more colorful than anything else could produce, and the disc is loaded with extras, from the required English and Japanese vocal tracks, subtitles, to additional DBZ info and never before seen clips that were cut from the US run of the TV series. If you're a DBZ fanatic, the release of Dead Zone (and the announcement of two more DBZ movies coming soon to DVD) is reason enough to purchase a player. If you've never given the series a chance, why not start here? While it's not my choice for first DVD anime title to purchase if you're new to the format (nothing still comes close to Tenchi), it's certainly worth the measly $25 cover price. - Shidoshi




Animation	B+	Overall B-
Dubbing	B+	
Story	B-	
Music	B-	

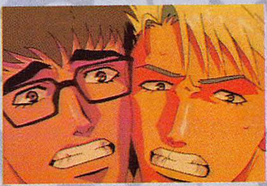
Kimera

Dubbed / A.D. Vision





While out for a drive one rainy night, Osamu and Jay notice a large group of troops converged on the road ahead. Before they know it, a firefight breaks out around them, and the two friends run into the nearby woods to take cover. Osamu stumbles upon a strange green-haired demon girl, but instead of being afraid, he is somehow drawn to her. From that point on, his life is forever changed, as he and Jay get intertwined in a secret bigger than any could imagine. Vampires, creatures thought only to be legend and myth, are not only real, but they have crashed upon the Earth with a plan; feed upon its human inhabitants to stop the extinction of their race. However, the question may not be if Osamu can stop the invasion on his own, but whose side is he really on? Kimera is a lot like many of the sci-fi monster movies that have been released by Hollywood over recent years; it's got a good idea, a story with quite



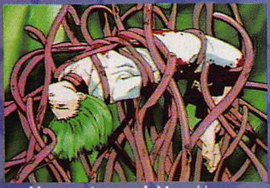
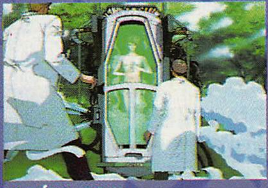


some potential, but it seems like the creators didn't know exactly what to do with it. At times, it's a little slow, and a tad awkward at others. As a complete package, it's not a bad anime title, it just could have been a really good movie as opposed to an okay one. If you're looking for something new to watch, Kimera is worth the time to check out, it's just not one that you should go out of your way to pick up.- Shidoshi

Animation	C+	Overall C+
Dubbing	C	
Story	B-	
Music	B+	





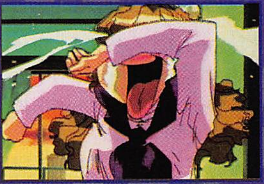



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Lady Blue : Volume 1

Subtitle / Anime 18



Miko Mido (famed star of LA Blue Girl) just can't win. All she really wants to do right now is live a normal life, go to school, and fall in love. At first, everything seems to be going fine, including the day that she meets the handsome Hidemasa, a boy Miko instantly falls for. However, dark forces are at work all around her. An ancient legend hangs over the city, a tale of two lovers that has passed from generation to generation for 400 years. One of the two has now awoken, and she is destined to regain her lost love... no matter how many humans she must destroy in the process.

I'd like to make two points before I get to the heart of my review; the first of which is that I've never seen any episodes from the LA Blue Girl series. Okay, I lie, I think I saw five minutes or so of one of the Video CD versions of the series. The reason for my not having seen LA Blue Girl leads into my second point - I've little time for hardcore Anime porn (though I do sometimes enjoy the tamer, tentacle-less adult stuff). Now, I've got nothing against it per say, and if it's a hobby of yours, more power to you. I, however, see little use in it, beyond the occasional title which does something different (such as the hilarious Sailor Moon parody Venus 5). So, imagine my surprise. Not only did Lady Blue actually have some shred of a story, it was good enough that I was interested in what was going on. Sure, it's another in the line of "female warrior fights against sex-starved tentacle creatures," but the story and the characters actually propel the title beyond most of the mindless fluff out there that's only good for its sex scenes. Adding to the surprise was the animation - it's far better than most of the hard-core titles that I've seen. Lady Blue actually seems to have had a decent budget and care taken in its creation, as opposed to a great lot of the stuff that's just thrown together to cash in on the adult Anime market.



All of this brings me to the big problem with Lady Blue - I REALLY wish it wasn't a hardcore Anime porn title. Sex scenes in Lady Blue are nowhere near as rampant as in most similar titles, and the main characters actually stay dressed for a good amount of time. Because of this, when the hardcore sex scenes break in - and I do mean REALLY hard-core, in certain respects - they almost seem out of place with the rest of the movie. If Lady Blue had been a soft-core title, if it had "naughty" scenes but not ones in the tradition of stuff like Urotsuki Doji, I would have a lot more respect for this title. As it stands now, the hardcore parts of Lady Blue may turn off average Anime fans, while hentai lovers may be disappointed that Lady Blue doesn't have more sex and less story. If you aren't dissuaded by the occasional adult scene, then I actually do recommend Lady Blue. Maybe it's just me, maybe the show isn't as good as I think it is, but I was really surprised and am quite looking forward to future episodes in the series. - Shidoshi

WARNING: Lady Blue is intended for mature audiences only, and is absolutely not for children or anyone under the age of 19.

		Overall
Animation	B	B-
Dubbing	N/A	
Story	B	
Music	B-	

AnimeFan "Oldies but Goodies"

This month's picks for titles you should go back and watch again, or MUST see if you never have.

Gunbuster

Sub / Manga Ent.

Before there was Evangelion, there was Gunbuster - the story of Noriko, the young robot pilot, and her awakening into the world around her. At once both a parody of "big robot" anime and a compelling tale perfectly fitting the genre, Gunbuster is an awesome adventure that comes to a climax in one of the most beautiful and emotional ending episodes ever created. Manga re-released Gunbuster not too long ago, so you should have no trouble finding yourself a copy. - Shidoshi







The Hakkenden

Sub, Dub / Pioneer Anime

The Hakkenden is one of those anime that I always meant to check out, but took forever to actually see. Once I did, I scolded myself for taking so long. An animated adaptation of "Nanso Satomi Hakkenden" (a well-known Japanese story by Bakin Takizawa), The Hakkenden tells the tale of the "dog warriors," eight brave men bound by fate to do battle with the forces of evil in Japan. With rich, beautiful animation and a compelling, epic story, The Hakkenden is Japanese anime at its finest. - Shidoshi







Anime News Service


Kiki's Delivery Service

Second Impact Misses America : No US release of the Evangelion movies? It seems as if working with Gainax and paying the large fees to license their titles is quite the chore, and after putting up the first large sum of money for the TV series, A.D.V. Films isn't in a hurry to pick up rights to the movies. It may come down to one of two situations (if luck is on our side): either A.D.V. Films waits a while before getting rights to the movies, and brings them out here at a later date, or a different company purchases the rights to the movies and brings them out. But who? Well, Viz was one of the companies who considered Evangelion before A.D.V. got the rights, and they are currently releasing the manga version... but that's just speculation on my part. • **Madness in March, Tenchi Style :** By the time you read this, two special Tenchi Muyo LaserDisc box sets should be available from Pioneer. The "Heaven" and "Earth" LD collections give you a chance to get the entire original Tenchi Muyo OAV series in two insanely-low-priced packages ($39.95 each). The first box set contains OAV episodes 1 through 7, while the second contains 8 through the Mihoshi Special. The main reason for this re-release is to gear up for the US release of the next Tenchi Muyo theatrical movie, Midsummer's Eve, which is the second in a trilogy of Tenchi Muyo theatrical movies (the third is said to be a follow-up to Tenchi Muyo in Love!). Midsummer's Eve introduces Mayuka, who is supposedly Tenchi's daughter! The movie is a continuation of the original OAV Tenchi Muyo series, and shows us what happens next in that storyline (for anyone who didn't know, TMiL! was based on the first Tenchi TV series, NOT the OAV... a bit confusing, as it came out in the US before the TV series did). Midsummer's Eve will be re-titled The Daughter of Darkness for the US market (a change I seriously don't approve of, but Pioneer feels it fits the US anime market better), however, a special "original" version that has the original name and box art may be made for the subtitled VHS version (I tried to convince Pioneer that DVD was a hardcore-fan-enough market to warrant a similar production, but to no avail). Tenchi Muyo : The Daughter of Darkness will be released in March, and will be available on VHS, LD, and DVD. • **DVD Anime Continues to Grow Slowly :** DVD wise, announcements are slow, but they're coming. Pioneer, in addition to the above-mentioned Tenchi movie, will also have Green Legend Ran on DVD in March. Beyond that, there are no solid announcements, but they are considering the idea of doing a few back-catalog titles should the DVD market become more stable (if my prayers are answered, one of those will be a Hakkenden box set). US Manga Corps/Central Park Media have ten DVD titles planned for the near future, but they are currently waiting on securing the rights to do them. I will say this... the rumor of Record of Lodoss War coming to DVD shouldn't be dismissed yet. Hopefully, Ghost in the Shell will be on store shelves when you're reading this. The long delay was caused because the company that was doing the transfer for Manga just couldn't get the colors matched properly. Along with Ghost, Manga will release Ninja Scroll (April), Macross II : The Movie (May), Wings of Honneamise (July), with the possibility of Macross Plus and Tetsu II : Body Hammer (a live action Japanese title). Viz, a company who has kept pretty quiet about the whole situation, has indeed announced their first title. They will be releasing their newly acquired Darkstalkers OAV series sometime late this summer, and they too are looking at some of their back catalog titles for the digital treatment (you know, of course, that Ranma will be one of them). And in one of the biggest rumors going around right now, there is talk that DVD transfers for Ah! My Goddess! and Bubblegum Crisis have either been done, or are being planned. Now, I tried contacting the company that is rumored to be picking up these titles, but so far I've been able to get no confirmation on this. So, all I have to say is that I REALLY hope this rumor is true (AMG! DVD is one of my most-wanted titles), and that whichever company picks them up, they make sure to do a good job on the transfer. • **Disney Delivers Kiki :** The following is from a recent press release sent out by Disney: Internationally renowned filmmaker, Hayao Miyazaki delivers another animation masterpiece in Kiki's Delivery Service. The film tells the delightful tale of Kiki, a young witch who must venture out on her own to find her place in the world. Celebrities including Kirsten Dunst, Phil Hartman, Debbie Reynolds, Janeane Garofalo, and Mathew Lawrence lend their voice talents to this exceptional film. The current set release date is September 22nd. And, of course, I've got strong opinions on the announcement. I'll be perfectly clear, I don't like the fact that Disney has rights to Mr. Miyazaki's works. They don't have a high opinion of anime, and I'd much, much rather see a REAL anime company hold the rights to these movies. While I'm just glad that American audiences will at least finally get to see and own copies of his wonderful movies (Nausicaa, Kiki, Laputa, etc.), dub-only version pushed as "not anime" rubs me the wrong way. As well, I'm not much of a fan of getting well-known voice actors to dub anime. While I've got nothing against Phil Hartman, and I've been a Janeane Garofalo fan for a long time now, I'd rather see voice actors hired strictly on their voice talent and how well they fit the character, and not because they're big-named stars. A year or so from now, I want to be able to pop a copy of Nausicaa or Kiki on DVD in, fire up the subtitles and Japanese voice track, and enjoy the features the way they were meant to be enjoyed. As I said, I am indeed happy that they are coming to our shores, but I'm a devoted Miyazaki fan, and I know Disney isn't going to treat them with the respect that they deserve. • **In Closing :** Manga Entertainment has two big products coming in the near future. First, they are teaming up with Pioneer LDC to release their Street Fighter II V television series on LaserDisc. They will also be releasing Lanlock, a new title from Masamune Shirow, the renowned anime and manga artist responsible for titles such as Ghost in the Shell and Appleseed. On the manga side of things, Viz will be releasing both DragonBall and DragonBall Z here in the US (they are releasing both because, by rough guess, it would take them ten years of releasing DragonBall to get up to DBZ). Both comics will be released in their "Special Edition" format - where the comic is kept in its original Japanese right to left reading format - which they are also currently doing for Evangelion. DragonBall will ONLY be released in this format, and it will be kept that way for any DragonBall graphic novels that come out. As well, Viz will also be putting out a line of Pulp graphic novels, based on the various titles that will appear in their recently-started mature manga anthology. Well, that's it folks - special hellos go out to Hal, the Mirandites, and anyone else I should be saying hello to, and I'll see you all again next issue! Until then, be nice, keep safe, and pick yourself up a copy of the Nausicaa manga if you haven't yet (it will change your life, I swear). - Shidoshi


Midsummer's Eve

AnimeFan Monthly Top 5

A.D.V. FILMS

Reader's Top 5

That's right anime fans, it's time to speak up and let us know what you're watching! List your top 5 favorite anime and send it in, attention AnimeFan! As always, we wouldn't dream of asking you to go to all the trouble of writing, mailing, and stamp-licking for nothing: We'll enter you in our bi-monthly drawing (one entry per person, per month) for the 20-inch Eva model pictured below and Evangelion 1 thru 6!! Two additional prizes will be given away each month. 1st prize - a full set of Burn Up W and a Burn Up W T-shirt and 2nd prize - a full set of Devil Hunter Yohko courtesy of AD Vision!

This Month's Winners!

Gillian Page
(aka the Anime Dominatrix)
Marlboro, VT

1 Ghost in the Shell
2 Ninja Scroll
3 Neon Genesis Evangelion
4 Burn-up W!
5 Devil Hunter Yohko

Michael Liam, Jr.
Seattle, WA

1 Neon Genesis Evangelion
2 Lapute : Castle in the Sky
3 Nausicaa
4 Armitage III
5 Final Fantasy : Lot Crystals

Davey Galvin
Bloomeville, NY

1 Tenchi Muyo!
2 Neon Genesis Evangelion
3 El Hazard
4 Oh My Goddess!
5 Gunbuster

Faith - Okay, so you didn't win... but at least you got your Sailor Moon pic in AnimeFan. That's worth something... right? Right?! <sob>





Editor's Top 5 - Shidoshi

1 Tenchi Muyo!
2 Dirty Pair : Project Eden
3 Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind
4 Goldenboy
5 Lady Blue



WIN!

Win Your Very Own, Personal EVA

To register simply send your top 5 anime picks along with your name, age, and address to: Anime Fan Top Five, 5137 Clareton Drive Ste. 210, Agoura Hills, CA 91301. Grand Prize: EVA Model (the big red one) and episode 1-6 of Evangelion. 1st Place prize: complete set of Burn Up W anime and a T-shirt. 2nd place prize: set of Devil Hunter Yohko anime. For a **free** AD Vision catalog write to: AD Vision 5750 Blintiff #217 Houston, TX 77036. No purchase necessary, void where prohibited, yada, yada, yada.





NEWS

Seeing as how it's pretty darn quiet in the Land of the Rising Sun as far as any major announcements go (we'll have Tokyo Game Show news next month), we thought we'd do a screen-shot heavy blow-out on the latest arcade titles to touch down in Japan. So without further ado, let's get to it...

SNK

While SNK continues to push the new Hyper NeoGeo 64 for all it's worth (alas, SS64 isn't all it could have been), they haven't completely abandoned the venerable '24-bit' system that made them bigger, badder, and better. Two new titles recently showed up, each a sequel to two of the best blasters to ever grace the arcades:

Metal Slug 2




All New Specialized Vehicles!!!




Blazing Star (Pulstar 2)




Capcom keeps the fighters rolling...

As much abuse as SNK used to get for doing seemingly nothing but fighting games for the arcade, I think it's time Capcom received a mild reprimand. When was the last time Capcom released an arcade game that wasn't a brawler? And no, *Puzzle Fighter* (there's that word again) doesn't count. Whatever happened to all the old Capcom shooters (the *19XX* series and *Side Arms*) and games like *Wonder 3* and *Strider*? Anyway, here's a look at Sony's latest PS-based hardware titles:

Street Fighter EX 2



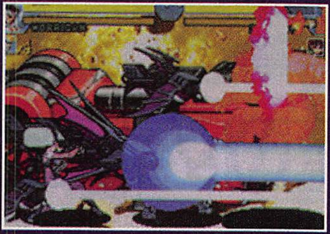


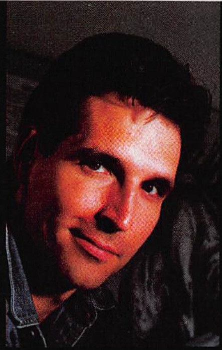


Star Gladiator 2




Marvel vs. Capcom



God Complex

Todd McFarlane admits he didn't make a deal with the devil...but would if offered.

By **Christopher Woodward**

Meeting *Spawn* creator Todd McFarlane at his Arizona offices is akin to entering a friendlier Fort Knox. The McFarlane empire was founded on a comic book, and has grown into what many in the entertainment industry regard as a staggering success, with sales of *Spawn* comics, toys, and other merchandise exceeding $36 million last year.

Since leaving Marvel Comics over five years ago in the mass exodus that created Image Comics, McFarlane himself has been called everything from a rebel, to a genius, to a psycho, any of which he's happy to embrace. Today, he's very busy as usual, inking a deal with HBO to extend the animated *Spawn* series to another season and finishing a publicity photo shoot. Once things settle down a bit, we spend an afternoon in his quiet office covering a broad range of topics—everything from God and Heaven to how to rescue the comic industry from its slump. And the question on everyone's mind....

"You can sit there and say that I draw bad and ugly things, but let me also tell you, I've been doing that for my entire career."

Will there be a sequel to Spawn: The Movie?
Todd McFarlane- We'll know in a couple months when they're going to trigger the sequel, but all signs point towards that. It won't actually manifest itself until '99, but we'll find out in '98.

How will you top this past year in '98 then?
Actually the way to top '97 is to diversify more than we have and to keep growing in terms of picking up more licenses in terms of the toys. The HBO animated series will start around February with new episodes, and that's going to be at least 12 more. To me, '97 was a big year because it was the year we took it out to the public on some level. What you do in '98 is grow upon the public perception and not concentrate so much on this country but internationally. The movie's not even going to break in some countries until '98, and the animation won't get over there until '98 either. You just keep saying the brand name and see how many people you can get to acknowledge the existence of it.

Your goal then isn't money, but recognition?
It's not about selling, it's about getting people to acknowledge the name. I can say "Superman" to my grandma, and she understands that. She hasn't bought anything in the last 25 years of him, but she's aware of who he is. And that's what I want for Spawn. It's not about selling product, it's more about for me, "I created an idea, do you know about my idea?" That's the goal as an artist. The other side of it is to see if we can sell a trinket or two. Unfortunately, the way you seem to be able to get people to acknowledge an idea's existence is to see if they'll buy trinkets of it. So you just have to balance the two.

How do you work within the company?
I'm not very good about schmoozing. I'm good at coming in and stating the goal and then getting the actual work done. I like manual labor. I'm the only guy within the ranks that actually understands all the pieces. Sometimes I do something that may seem completely illogical to someone, but then when I explain how it ties into other things, they say, "Oh, now I see. I didn't even know that was going on." Because, again, I'm not very good about writing everything down and spreading the word out to everyone about what's happening everywhere. So everything's still got to go through me at some point.

Are you out to rule the world with this?
I'm in it because I think you can treat people fairly and be equitable and put out a fair product at a fair price. If you want to be IBM, forget them. If you want to do that, you've got to hype shit and put an inferior product out and squeeze people for every nickel, and that will come back and haunt you every single time. I can show you a hundred cases where a big company has gone up in smoke.

Like Marvel Comics, for instance?
OK, let's take Marvel Comics. I dislike Marvel, I dislike the system. I dislike it because when I get pissed at Marvel, there is no "Mr. Marvel" to go to. But when you come to McFarlane Enterprises, you can come up to Todd McFarlane and say something to my face if you want. But you can't do that with Marvel. You're fighting ghosts when you go up against these companies. There's no one who will take responsibility for what they're doing. What do they call them, CEOs? Those guys are a dime a dozen, we trade those guys off like busboys. If they had put me in charge of Marvel Comics in 1992, and I disliked them, and I wanted to put them in bankruptcy, I would be in jail because it would be so blatant and so transparent that I put a billion dollar company in bankruptcy that they would go, "You hated them and you tried to put them in bankruptcy." I couldn't do it in five years! You see? I'd have to stretch it out to 10 years before I could make a case in court to defend myself. Instead we've got a hundred guys trying not to put them in bankruptcy and spend the billion dollars to keep them propped up, and instead they put them in bankruptcy. That is a superpower. That is a skill that very few have, to piss away a billion dollar company so that you have nothing when you were trying to do the opposite. I'm telling you, that's like Michael Jordan has abilities that not too many people can match, that's an ability not too many people can match too.

So what are they doing wrong?
If you go into any board room meeting and say, "I think we should scale back," you're fired. You need to lie. You need to go in there and say, "I think we can sell twice as much. We sold 5 billion and there's only 5 billion people on the planet, but I think we can sell 10 billion this year." OK, right. It's unnatural. In these big corporations, people just can't think like rational, adult human beings. I've had more luck arguing with like a seven year old kid.

What do you do differently to succeed, then?
I don't do market research, I don't do test planning--I do it on instincts. You just need to do it. I do something that is kind of like an odd thing these days, I use common sense. I don't know why they call it common sense anymore, because it's certainly not plentiful. It doesn't even get applied on a day-to-day basis within business. I'm far too simplistic for big business. If people are thirsty and they want something big, then give them a lot of liquids. How do I survive in the toy business? How about if I just make a better toy. Well, to make a better toy, you have to spend more money. And what happens when you spend more money? You've got to make less profit. OK, well, who owns the company? I do. And who does that hurt, making less profit? Me. And Todd, how does that make you feel? I could give a rat's ass. I just want to break even. And if I break even, it entitles me to give bleeding ulcers to these people.

"We can sit there and talk Biblical all we want then I'll get up and deliver my speech about why

ust to say, "It can be done." I want to be the nartyr on some level, to tell to the world, that if ou have time, if you have money, you can create anything on this planet. Look at ime/Warner. They're going to own the entire lanet. And we'll see it probably in a thousand ears, it won't be called Earth, it will be called TW.

Nostradamus may have predicted a slightly ifferent future for the planet, but McFarlane's ision may have something to do with the age n which he lives. The '90s are a time in which does in fact seem like everything can be ought. McFarlane's fictional hero, Spawn, ses up from Hell after basically selling his soul o return to Earth and see the woman he loves nce more. The vengeful though somewhat ragic nature of the character seems to have ained McFarlane an enthusiastic audience esponse no one could have predicted.

Why do you believe people have embraced he image and character of Spawn so much?
t's not about it being dark or violent, it's about being real. Which is kind of weird given that ou're dealing with such a fantasy element. nd the reality of it is that the character is very lawed. And because of that flawed piece of im, some things he does are good, and some hings are bad, and you think, "He shouldn't act ut of anger." And to me that's much more eal. You know, you and I have good days and ad days and some times we actually make ash decisions, but we have to deal with the onsequences of that. You have to set things ight or deal with it.

So it's not about big ideologies?
t's not about Heaven and Hell or any of these ig concepts, it's about you. You don't want to e called a mechanic, then don't fix cars. I hink most things are within our grasp to control. I think most people don't believe they are, ut I think just started when Donahue started is show. And now everybody has a group where they can go, "Oh, it's a disease, it's not my responsibility."

How do you react to critics who find offense with *Spawn*?
f you want to tell me that what I'm doing is offensive, that it's going to disturb your kid, well, I'll tell you what's going to disturb them more, raising them in a family with one parent that doesn't give a crap about the kid that's going to grow up not knowing what a functional family is supposed to be about and will probably repeat the cycle. So you can point the finger of blame all you want, but you do go to church on Sunday, so God bless you. I'd rather be an Atheist with a woman that I've been with for 20 years, my wife, and children that adore me, and then draw a few little monsters with ketchup stains on them that you call blood and live my life that way than be hypocritical. I don't have much patience for people who point the moral finger at me who don't even get along with their own spouse. I'm sick and tired of where we are society right now, where the divorce rate is 65%, that to me is repugnant. But I don't have no time for morality conversations. You want to talk to me about your job, or about sports, OK.

Will you talk about your own family life?
Everything that I do and I am is for my family. It's not by accident that the man in the Spawn comic book is back from Hell and made a deal for his soul for a woman named Wanda which happens to be the name of my wife. Which is what I would do. I'd trade my soul. If the moment I died, I could trade my soul to have another year with her. "What do you need? My soul? OK, take it." If I had two of them you could have both, it doesn't mean nothing to me. A soul, Heaven, Hell, Armageddon, it doesn't mean nothing to me. You know why? Because I'm a human. We can sit there and talk Biblical all we want and say it's not for us to understand, and then I'll get up and deliver my speech about why I think God's a screw-up.

OK, I'll bite. How is God "a screw-up?"
If He supposedly has the power to create the cosmos, why can't He make the ants understand. I would have made the ants understand, but that's me, I'm a kooky guy. To me, I'm not the kind of guy that sits there and goes, "I've got all of this infinite power, and I'm going to sit there and have a billion stars and a billion planets, but I'm not going to put any life on any of them." I'm talking about people who deal with the Bible here and don't believe in other life out there. I mean, look out the window if you've got a window near you, and look at something across the street and pretend there's a grain of sand on it, and that's Earth. So it seems kind of kooky to me that you created everything that's outside my window for one speck of dust. And then populate that speck of dust with people, don't give them enough brains to understand what it's all about, let them live for 50 or 60 years, but then kill them. And before you kill them, make sure they bow a knee to you, even though they don't understand what you are, they feed your ego. I mean you think I've got a big ego, let's figure this one out. I'm going to plant ants on a speck of dust, and I want them to bow their knee to me and if they don't, I'm going to damn them for all eternity. I don't know what that's all about. I'm missing that.

So, for you, there is no greater power than Todd McFarlane?
I think that God is some 5 year old kid who's flunked his first test in kindergarten. He kind of didn't get it. If he says what I just said, I don't think he got an A on his report card. "So let me understand what you said, Johnny God, you're going to do what to the ants?" "I'll kill them! And you should see them cry when I kill them. And some of them I give tuberculosis, and I do all this stuff to them. And then in the end I want them to bow a knee to me. Because I can create infinity, but I need ants to bow a knee to me. Because if they don't I'll burn them for eternity." I'm missing the whole concept of all of that. All I can deal with is what is. And what is today and tomorrow, and that I know as a fact, you can't argue with that. I know that I've got a wife and a family and that everything I've done on a business level and all the success I've had doesn't mean a damn if you can't get along with the people you live with.

Why haven't we seen much about all of this before?
The reason you don't see much printed about me and my family is because it's not a story. A story is someone who wins the Lotto who gets 20 million bucks, and drives around in a brand new limo, but he's been married three times and his kids are disenchanted by it all, and he's an alcoholic and he swats his third wife and he's up on assault and battery charges. But if he's made a lot of money, our society says that guy's a success. Screw that guy. I'll stack up my life against anyone else's. You can sit there and say that I draw bad and ugly things, but let me also tell you, I've been doing that for my entire career. I've got a wife that I've been with for 20 years. I met her when she was 13 and we've been together ever since. I've got two kids who still think I'm the center of their universe. And I'd burn everything I have if it ever got in the way of them. And the success that I have will never be taken from me because nobody can take it from me. My company can go bankrupt. Whatever. Do you think my wife's going to care one way or another? Nope. She was with me when I was penniless. That's why I'm fearless. They can't take anything from me because they don't understand what matters to me. I'm not in it for the money.

and say it's not for us to understand, and I think God's a screw-up."

Money may not be first on Todd McFarlane's list of priorities, but it certainly isn't something he's had to worry about. As the Spawn franchise infects the globe, more and more notice is being given to the unorthodox attitudes he has about business and the success he's found with them. Sometimes it's hard to remember, in fact, that all of this came from a comic book, an entertainment medium that's had its ups and downs and may be languishing in one of its worst slumps ever. It's a medium, however, that still matters--on some levels--to McFarlane.

Do you read other comics than *Spawn*?
Not really.

What about TV? Movies?
No. I don't watch TV, I have two kids, so I don't have the luxury of seeing too many movies, and I haven't read comics for years.

But this is what you do....
It doesn't stop me from doing all of that stuff. Because, again, it's just like I'm not a cook. But if I decided to cook my own breakfast, I'd put ingredients in that I like. It's more like, here's what I like, so this is how I make it.

How do you respond to people like [comic creator] Frank Miller charging that Hollywood is pillaging the comic industry?
It's a tough one because I know where his frustration is coming from. Only we can prevent forest fires. If you don't want that to happen, then don't make the deal. If somebody says, "Here's the deal, we're going to take your idea and pay you $10,000. And after that you don't have anything to do with it. You get the money and that's it," don't do it. Lowell Cunningham, the guy who gave the impetus for the movie *Men in Black*, He didn't see nothing in that, he didn't have any input into that. So maybe him and Scott Rosenberg can blur the line and say they did, but those two had nothing to do with that movie. It was an option that somebody pulled out of the drawer from a long time ago and blew off the dust and made into a movie. But if they're willing in hindsight to say that was a deal they made and they're going to stick with it, then it's not for me to say they made a bad deal. They were the ones that made that decision, which no one forced them to make.

So your advice to comic creators is...?
If there's someone out there thinking, "Oh, I just want to make the movie, I've got to have it, I just can't wait, I want to be famous, and I've got the 900th best-selling comic book." That person can't sit there and demand too many things. You have to sit there and decide if you're going to stick to your guns and demand stuff or if you're going to take the deal they give you. And either way you swing that, you're the one who has to make that call. You can't have your cake and eat it too.

Todd, you can say that. You have the best-selling comic book in the country.
Yes, okay, you can, if, and there's some ifs there, and that's where I come in, if you walk in the door and say, "I've got the #1 property." Well—

You're going to get what you want.
Not necessarily. If you go in there and say, "I've got the #1 property and I want to be screwed," that's what will happen, because they still want to take advantage of you.. I had plenty of times where they muscled me and I just went, "Guys, I'm out of here." And they say, "You know how much money is on the table?" And I just say, "Whatever. I've been telling you for the last three months that it's not about money, and the last words out of your mouth are about the money. You guys are morons. It's not about that."

How many times did you walk out of deals like that?
Enough so that word got around to make people go, A) This guy does not bluff, or B) he's psycho. And either one of those serves me well. And that's why I've got to send the people in to schmooze. Because I'm not good at playing the game. I'm too practical to deal with business. I want it to be like this: "Hi, I'm Todd. What's your name, Bill? OK, Bill, I don't want you to ask me about how my family is because I know you don't give a shit. And I'm not going to ask you about your family because at least I'm mature enough to know I don't give a shit about your family either. It's got nothing to do with what we're here for. Here's how this deal can be structured. Here's what I need, here are my demands. Here are the things that cannot be changed, I don't care what you say, these are non-negotiable. Can we get through them? Good. Now what are your points that you guys won't negotiate? Perfect. Okay, we got through mine and yours. How many other points are there? 400? Fine we can compromise on all of those, let's go." And then the deal's done.

But it's never that simple.
But like I said, the deal is what you are willing to take. You know if you sit down and make a pros and cons list, it's all about that. "What am I gaining and losing, what am I giving up to get this." It's up to the individual. If it's important to you to write the script to your movie, you'd better put that in your contract. If you don't, then don't bellyache about it later. If you want everything, you've got to fight for it. That's why I walk out of deals and stuff. I don't want to pass the buck, I've got to be involved in all of it. I don't want to say, "The guy who directed it, or the guy who wrote it sucks." I want to have something to do with all of it, and that's why my name's stuck right there. So if you don't like the movie or the toys or the comics, then that's my fault. I will accept blame not only for myself, but for my company and the people I employ because they're going on Todd McFarlane's marching orders. I'll try better next time. That's it. I don't like to bellyache. I'm a doer.

It's obvious that McFarlane's success speaks well of his "Just do it" attitude. And the support he's felt from the recent release of the *Spawn* movie as well as the animated series has bolstered his position in entertainment. It's finally clear that his dark comic book anti-hero has sparked a franchise for him. And McFarlane hasn't forgotten where it all started—he still attends comic book conventions and often reads fan mail that besieges the office. And despite his not reading comics anymore, he still seems to have all the answers.

How important are your fans?
Their opinions mean more to me than anyone else's.

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The business guys, I'm just another file to them. But the fans, to me, I live and die by them. Now, within those confines, you can't keep all the people happy all the time.

Have they dictated the current mood in comics?
Comic books are dark and bleak because people are getting sick of everything being politically correct today. The people who like *Spawn* are like me, they're just sick of everybody always saying the right thing. We're just so kooky right now in not wanting to offend anyone that we've become vanilla ice cream. Nobody wants to stand up and have a cause. I'm not pretending to be anything different than what I am. With *Spawn*, there's either two people: you either get it or you get out of the way. I'm not begging you to like it, just don't buy it and go buy something else. Don't begrudge me for putting it out there. Do you go to the grocer and tell them not to put spinach on the stands because you don't like it? No. Don't begrudge me for presenting an idea. If you don't endorse it, it dies quickly.

How would you "fix" the comic industry?
Every time a new head guy comes in at Marvel, they call me with the same question: "Todd, if you were in charge, what would you do?" And I tell them the same thing: the answer is time. What I'm going to tell you takes time. If you want to know how to fix it in thirty days, I don't have that answer for you. You need to have time. The reason you need time is because you need to reorganize and restructure the whole system. As the publishers, we need to stop being greedy; we need to stop maximizing profit. If you do it during the good times, you can imagine now that when people are trying so hard to find a nickel now, when they find one, they milk it for all it's worth. And the reason you don't do that is that you might not actually be thirsty. You save what you don't need. If you're not hungry, don't eat. There might come a time when you're hungry and the cupboard will be bare. As publishers we have to put out a better quality product. We have to advertise it with a little more truth, so that everything isn't like the end of the world and the Holy Grail. We've got to charge a reasonable price and not worry about going to the well 500 times.

And the second point?
Once we resist temptation, you have to go to the next level and reeducate the retailers. And that's a big hurdle. 85% of the stores are stereotypical stores. It's off the beaten path. It has a poster shoved up on every square inch of the window, and some of them even have bars on the window and things like that. And they look like pornography stores. They've got a 20 watt light bulb in it and haven't painted the walls or bought one new fixture for the store in five years.
How do we grow the marketplace and succeed?
You get new customers. How do you do that? You become customer friendly. If I was going to go into business, I'd go into a strip mall, close to where people would be walking, and I'd put my comic books to the back of the store, I would diversify, one of the things people aren't doing. Put the comic books in the back, because comic readers are habitual. They will come on the same day every week. They're going to come. Then at the front of your store, put a little bit of *Pocahontas*, *Jurassic Park*, *Men in Black*. Put out whatever's hot. Make it a hat or a shirt or a toy or a coloring book. Do something that's not a comic book. And then, here's the miracle, some grandma with her 5 year-old Sally is going to step into your store after they see those things. And I'm not saying they're ever going to buy anything, I'm saying they might be browsing, window shopping and then walk out. But you're accomplishing something that you never have before. You've got a grandma and a 5 year-old girl in your shop. The way most of them are set up now, it would never happen. But given that most guys who run stores are hobbyists and not businessmen, what I'm talking about is being a businessman. That means you've got to stop doing it the old-fashioned way. That's all they know and that's how they do it, though.

Do you believe most stores will change or go out of business first?
I don't know. I'm getting tired of nobody wanting to fight for anything, nobody wants to have a cause. Whether it be a speed bump in your driveway, there's got to be something you want to fight for. That and maybe it's just that I structure things too weirdly in my life.

How so?
Some things are very black and white for me. The fights that I've had are so that when I die, people can say Todd McFarlane died a free man. Or at least trying to be a free man.

The views and opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily represent the opinions or policies of GameFan Magazine.

wrote it sucks." I want to have something to do with all of it, movie or the toys or the comics, then that's my fault."

OTHER STUFF

Welcome to the latest edition of the hottest news (and some stuff we found on the Internet) going around the industry. And although some of it may have sprung from the rather fertile minds of PR and marketing people (not to mention little Jimmy), for the most part, this is the goods. So without further ado, let the semi-legal ramblings begin...

Tobal 2 Kicks and Punches its Way to the US

Believe it or not, it isn't entirely over for the best 3D fighter not to come to the states. A rather large US publisher has expressed keen interest in acquiring this one for distribution in the US. The company to be named when it's legal for us to do so had an interest back when *T2* made its Japanese debut, but Square balked since they had a contract with Sony at the time. Now that that's history (as of *FF Tactics*), it looks to be fair game. Cross your fingers and hope really hard on this one as it hasn't lost any of its punch.

Xenogears to Make an Appearance After All?

Initially suspected to be left in the land of *FF5* and the *Dragon Quest* series, it seems Square may take the publishing duties of this one on themselves. It would be Square's first US-published game since *Secret of Evermore* (ack), and a good one to boot. Featuring a mix of sprite-based characters in polygonal environments (a la *Grandia*) with 'better than *FF7*' battle sequences, this could be the next big PS RPG (*Parasite Eve*, not withstanding).

The Moon Rises Over Sony

Game Arts finest hour, *Lunar*, has officially been announced for publication on Sony's PS, with a tentative May release date. As well, Working Designs has picked this one up for an August (make it so, please) US release along with scrapping the Saturn version. They do however insist that *RayEarth* is still gonna make it even if it kills them - if it doesn't, well, several Internet users may take it into their own hands. Oh, and *Silhouette Mirage* is also a possibility for a PS release from WD.

Metal Slug Rolls its Way Across the Pacific

SNK's awesome Contra-esque shooter is a good bet for a second quarter US release from another large US publisher. While Working Designs had been linked to this one before, it appears that someone else is quite interested in this as well as other more 'obscure' import PS games. Let's hope this is the start of something good. As for a Saturn version, well, if I was a betting man... I'd bet on something else.

New Details Regarding Sega's Next Big Thing

This week they're calling it Katana, but one thing is looking more and more certain. What's that you ask? It seems Sega is very interested in getting their new console out by Christmas of this year in Japan and America. The key is software support. If Sega can get at least ten games ready in time for a holiday release the system will fly. If not it gets pushed into early '99. My advice? Whip those teams until they can't work anymore, Sega needs it out by this Christmas, early '99 ain't gonna cut it. As for tentative launch titles, expect a clutch of AM group arcade titles out the gate *VF3+*, *Daytona 2*; multiple games from Game Arts including *Grandia Remix*, a new *Gun Griffon* title, and the return of *Silpheed*; Core with a 3D platformer and a racing game; Shiny with *Messiah* and *Sacrifice*; Id with *Quake 2* and *Sacrament*, and many others. Apparently, *Phantasy Star 5* is also on its way to Sega's 64-bitter. It looks stunning and should make a showing at the upcoming Tokyo Game Show. VR Sports and Infogames have also signed on and should send some sports and *Looney Tunes* games Sega's way.

Saturn Still Hanging in There

While the Saturn is limping along in the US with major retailers left and right liquidating stock, SOA is still keen to keep the hard core gamers satisfied with a pack of new games brought over from their Japanese parent. *Dragon Force 2* and *Shining Force 3* Chapters 2-3 look like a lock for the US. *Grandia* is still a possibility, especially given that Sega UK is doing the translation for their neck of the woods. Although the mood at Sega HQ is somber, things are finally looking up on the import side; now where's *Thunder Force 5*, *Silhouette Mirage*, and *X-Men vs SF*? And in Saturn port land, *KoF '97* will not utilize the 4 meg RAM cart. Seems SNK and Capcom don't get along too well and they refuse to swallow their pride <sigh>. Meaning the gamer pays the price; how sad.

Secret of Mana on N64? YES!

Yep, it's true: Square is on board with the Big N again, with a *Secret of Mana* game in the pipeline. And while details are sketchy at this point, it's clear that Nintendo must have coughed up some serious cash for this one. Although you shouldn't expect this one anytime soon (up to 2 years off) it does give Nintendo some clout in the RPG area again. After getting so soundly hammered by Sony's behemoth in Japan (thanks in no small part to a lack of RPG's thus far) it appears Nintendo may be on the right track again. Could a new *Dragon Quest* be far away?

Bond Gets His License Revoked on N64

It was originally assumed that Rare was working on a new Bond game based on one of the older films as a sequel to their runaway hit, *Goldeneye*. However, it now seems that Rare is more keen on putting their own original character in the 'sequel.' While this may disappoint some, most probably don't really care as long as they get something that features that amazing engine again (which is now even better <gasp>).

Release Dates and the Delay Zone

Don't expect *Turok 2* for the N64 until August at the earliest. Acclaim and Iguana want to take their time on this one - it'll be worth the wait. *X-Men: COTA* may finally hit in March for PS, although seeing as how this one has been delayed for what seems like forever don't be surprised if it slips again. Over at Activision, *Apocalypse* won't see the light of day until Christmas; just in time to go up against *One 2* <sigh>. Gametek and their long-awaited and extremely delayed *Robotech 64* cart won't show until the end of the 3rd quarter but doesn't have a publisher as of yet, so it's very up in the air. *Youngblood* for PS is now slated for a March release and all you Liefeld fans should be quite happy with it. Shiny and Interplay have decided that *Wild 9's* won't be ready until the 4th quarter (probably to implement the *Messiah* engine). Kalisto has *Fifth Element* now slated for completion in the 2nd quarter and is currently shopping around for a publisher; earth to Activision. *Gex: Enter the Gecko* has a tentative release date of April for PC and N64. *Twisted Edge Snowboarding* for N64 is now slated for a Christmas debut. Psygnosis' *Psybadek* won't see the light of day till October and Kronos' *Cardinal Syn* has been pushed back from February to June. Oh, and of course the most delayed game ever (on consoles at least), *Magic Knight RayEarth*, is still on track but don't expect that till the second quarter at best... c'mon WD, we need this game.

And the Winner is...

The envelope please: Here are the TRST numbers for the ten best-selling games of '97, i.e. from January through December:

1. **Mario Kart 64** (N64) 1.6 million
2. **Star Fox** (N64) 1.2 million
3. **Super Mario 64** (N64) 1.2 million
4. **Diddy Kong Racing** (N64) 1.1 million
5. **Goldeneye** (N64) 1.0 million
6. **Final Fantasy 7** (PS) .798 million
7. **NFL Gameday '98** (PS) .706 million
8. **Star Wars: SOTE** (N64) .622 million
9. **Madden '98** (PS) .619 million
10. **Crash Bandicoot** (PS) .548 million

All in all, it was a very happy holiday up in Redmond. Apparently Nintendo also made over a billion dollars worldwide on SNES and Gameboy; not too shabby. And even though, system-wise, PS outsold N64 1.44 to 1, Nintendo hit them where it counts: software sales. All in all Nintendo had their best year EVER, and expect '98 to be even better. Congrats to the Big N on a hugely successful year.

Resident Evil 2 Oozes it's Way to Saturn ...with a 4 Meg Shotgun Blast!

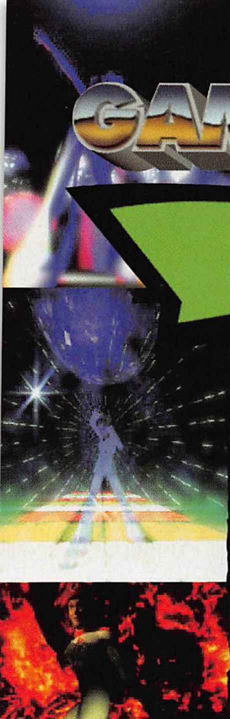
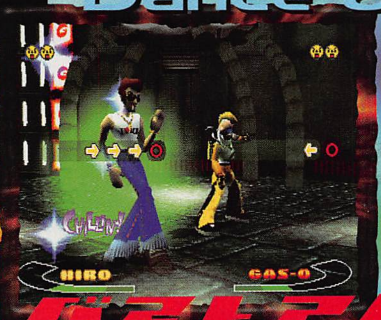
This is about as good as news gets for the few people still interested in Sega's flagging 32-bitter (hang in there, guys): The SS rev of *RE2* will use the new 4 meg RAM cart (from *XM vs SF*) for some major enhancements. "Like what?" you ask in manic glee. Cleaner and higher res textures for starters, as well as more variety in enemies and actual BG animation. Saturn owners can start getting pumped now as the 4 Meg RAM cart for Saturn is hanging by a thread with Capcom USA refusing to let it go - way to go Capcom! Hopefully they can convince their parent in Japan to bring it out after the runaway hit that is *Resident Evil 2*-360,000 copies in its first weekend on sale. It grossed over $19 million, more than any other movie that week, minus *Titanic*. C'mon Sega, subsidize the damn thing for your fans. It looks as if Capcom is finally getting around to releasing some of its older arcade titles on a compilation disk for Saturn and PlayStation. Ten games in total, 5 from CPS1 (*Strider*, *Final Fight*, *Street Fighter 2*) and 5 pre-CPS1 games (*Black Tiger*, *1941*, *Street Fighter*). While the actual titles aren't carved in stone, it should include some of the aforementioned titles and then some. Oh, and remember how we mentioned that *Final Fight EX* was coming to Sega's ST-V system? Well you can expect that to debut in the Spring, with a US release to follow shortly thereafter.

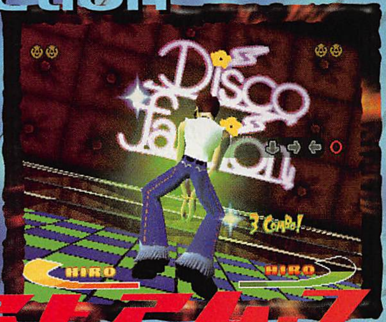
Lara Croft Cast in Chrome

From Comic Images comes Lara Croft Clearchrome trading cards. Each pack contains seven shots of the lovely Ms. Croft in various new and old poses catering to the fanboy in all of us. Each card features the traditional trading card 'chrome' effect as well as a transparent background. The back of each card features bio information (including her measurements: 38-22-34 <yipe!>) and tips and would go along great with all that Lara Croft stuff you have stored on your hard drive, the action figures, oh, and the game.

Bust A Move

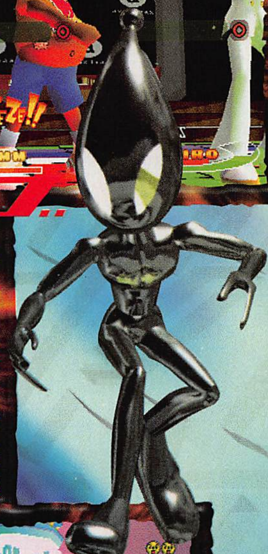
Dance & Rhythm Action

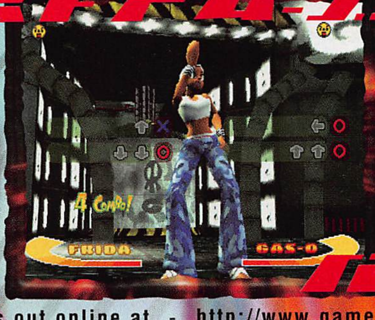



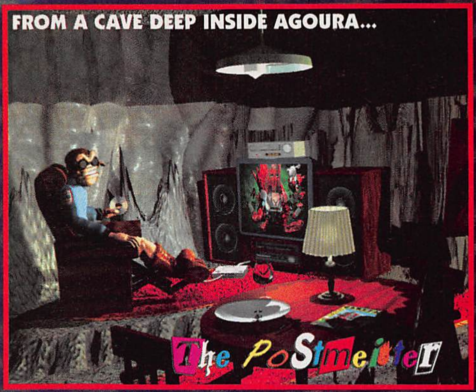


After a reasonably long day of work, I was 'bout to leave for some enjoyment of *Cotton 2* at home when low and behold, Waka walks in and tells me that this game HAS to go into *GameFan* somewhere. Sighing with some disparity, I pop in this import called *Bust A Move* by Enix (not that bubbly puzzle game mind you) and proceed to play. Three hours later, I'm still playing this game, gawking at the incredible motion captured dancing nimation, really dope beats, and some fresh characters (including a giant 4 story robot). *Bust A Move* takes *Parappa the Rapper* to the next level. Instead of rapping, your characters perform dance moves, each with their individual style. I would ramble on, but I don't have the room, so check it out next month...oh yeah shake that bootie...



ONE OF OUR FEMALE CONSTITUENTS

Dear Postmeister,

Wuz up? I was wondering if you could do me a favor. Please print my letter (or I will do nothing but send you letters that say "please," and this word will haunt you forever...) I'd really appreciate it, if you did.

I'd like to let you know that I love reading *GameFan* magazine (even though I am a girl and most people think it is weird that I read a video game magazine). I also like the Jen art. I think those are really good drawings. I, too, am a good artist. I'll have to send you in some drawings, some time. Do you know what's strange? In *Street Fighter EX + Alpha*, there's a character named Allen Snider. That's neat because that's my brothers name (except his first name is spelled A-l-a-n).

I have a couple of questions:

1) I was really hoping that *Dragon Ball Z Legends* would come over here? Will It?

2) I've heard of a *Chrono Trigger 2*, for the PlayStation. When will it be made?

3) In *Tomb Raider 2*, when you are at [Laura's] home, how do you get into the closet? What's the point of the secret passage, downstairs? What's the butler there for (was I supposed to lock him in the freezer)?

Well, that's it for questions. I will say one last thing, before I depart:

"Long live Akira Toriyama!"

Send ya a picture, later,
Leah Snider
Goose Creek, S.C.

Dear Leah,

How are you, Leah? Isn't Goose Creek where they have the World Hushpuppy Cook-Off? I tell you, I love South Carolina! It's all about South of the Border; those road signs are like an old friend, keeping me company as I make my way down your lonely, Spanish-mossed lined highways, on my way to sunny Florida. Personally, I always liked the sign "You're always a wiener at South of the Border" and it has that little guy holding a hotdog, in his hand. That one's always good for a chuckle. You know, I once stayed over at one of the hotels there. My friend and I got to choose our room off of a placemat, at the front desk. Those rooms have lots of mirrors.

I'm getting off track, here, though. You had a few questions for me. Don't want to bum you out, but *Dragon ball Z Legends* ain't coming out here, any time soon. Sorry.

As far as *Chrono Trigger 2*, that's a wash-out, as well. There was some talk, at one point, about a possible sequel, but nothing ever materialized.

You seem to be spending a lot of time in Lara's home. You know, there is a game past the front door... and that's where the closet comes in, my pretty little lass. After you defeat the last boss, you will find yourself in your house, under attack from crazed cultists. The closet is full of guns for you to fend off the zealots with. The passage has no purpose, except to act as a trophy room, showing you the stuff Lara has acquired, in her travels. As far as the butler is concerned, he is just there, for effect. A nice little addition that probably deserved better than to be locked in a cooler.

Send me some of your pictures,
Posty

THE GREAT AMERICA MEMORY WIPE

Dear Posty,

The purpose of this letter is to raise a point or two, and hopefully get some answers. Once again, Sega of America is leaving gamers out in the cold. Doesn't anyone out there remember being frustrated by their lack of support for the Sega CD, the 32X debacle, or how the Genesis was dumped in the Old Systems Home (*Time Killers* and *Marsupilami*??) without many quality titles, released. Personally, I think it's time that they got out of the hardware business (as far as home systems) and concentrate on what they do best: developing arcade games and converting them to the home systems.

Right now everyone seems so psyched about this Dural (or whatever it's going to be called) that they're quick to forget past transgressions [by Sega]. Meanwhile, Saturn is sinking faster than the Titanic, despite some amazing looking upcoming titles, which, if based on this holiday season, won't be promoted, as they should be. Based on Sega's track record, the Dural will launch, last for a year and a half to two years, and then be declared obsolete and become relegated to the back of the closet, with the other Sega systems.

Believe it, or not, I don't own a Saturn (yet). I've been playing a friend's, whenever I need a *Guardian Heroes* or *Panzer Dragoon* fix. She's actually going to sell me hers, cheap, because she is so disgusted with Sega, but doesn't feel that writing letters will do any good. I hope this proves her wrong and will help a little!

Greg Wilcox
Bronx, NY

Dear Greg,

Believe me, I sympathize with you. I was one of the stupid few who forked over $210 when the Sega CD first came out. After my initial fascination with some of the FMV titles, as well as *Dark Wizard* and *Night Trap* the choice of titles was bleak. Sure *Shining Force* and *Earthworm Jim* were great, but two games a library does not make. When Sega announced that they were pulling the plug on Sega CD, I almost passed a stone. That experience, coupled with the 32X farce, is what turned me away from buying a Saturn and into the arms of Mother Sony.

While all Saturn owners have every right to be disgruntled, let's not go on a witch hunt for Sega, yet. There are some phenomenal Saturn titles out there (and no, *Nights* is *not* one of them). Unfortunately, Sega of America keeps most of them from us. Let's not get into that, though.

With all of the lay-offs at Sega this past January, I can only assume that they have woken up and see that some major retooling needs to be done.

Maybe it's my Genesis bias talking, but I have faith (and you should, too) in the Dural. If its specs are as good as they boast, then the games will rock. The third party support will be there, too, and that's really what makes or breaks a system. If they blow it, with the Dural, though, you have my permission to disown them.

ENOUGH LOVE TO GO AROUND

Dear Posty,

As a guy who has never owned a non-Sega product, I must say that I am 150% proud to make the PlayStation my first foray into the non-Sega arena. I owned the Atari 2600 first. After "the crash" I was introduced to the "next level" of the Master System, by my cousin, in '86; from there, i went on to Genesis.

I kept up, through the magazines and word of mouth, throughout the late '80's to the present, so I knew that the PlayStation was the machine to buy. Oh, Sega, even though the Sony machine and games outclass the Saturn, from the bottom of my heart I hope the Dural can reestablish you as a premiere video game manufacturer. Anyway, I have a few questions that I hope you can help me with:

1)Do you have anything on *FFVIII*? *FFVII* is simply one of those games, that in ten years, I will play through, again and again.

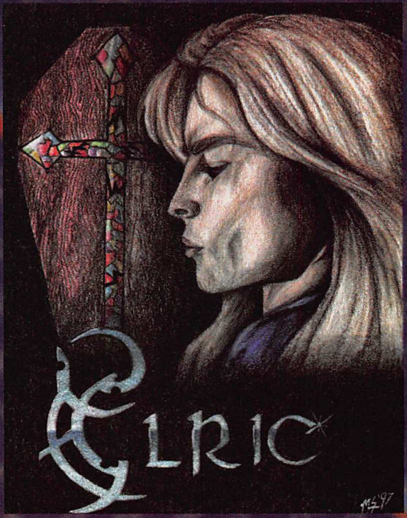
2) Will Sega ever consider a *Phantasy Star* compilation, like [Nintendo's] *Super Mario All-Stars*? I would buy a Saturn or Dural (when it arrives), just for that.

Patrick O'Gorman, Jr.
Watertown, WI

Dear Patty,

Slow down. Square has barely caught its breath from the last task and you're already asking for another? Lucky for you that those guys work like Doozers, because they are currently working on a project that, while maybe not entitled *FFVIII*, is definitely in that vein... In an answer to your *Phantasy Star* question: don't count on it.

And now for some fan art! As you can see we're getting in some terrific artwork, so keep sending your original art and let us show it off for you!



Michelle Sievert sent in this picture of *Castlevania's* Elrick - Great work Michelle



Betty and Helen Hong made Shidoshi's day by sending us this *Samurai Showdown* drawing.

Write to me or I'll run for President!

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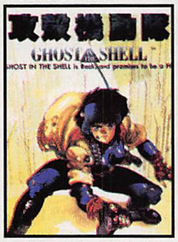
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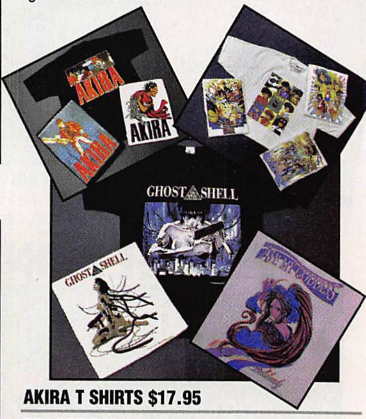
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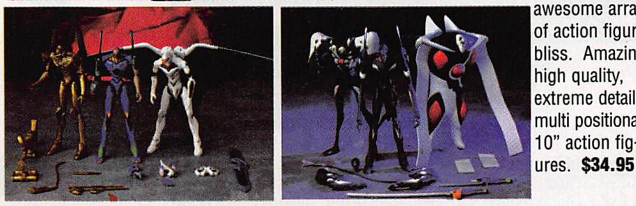
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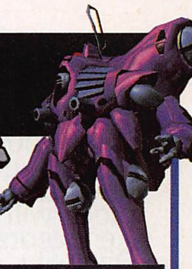




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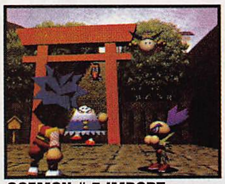
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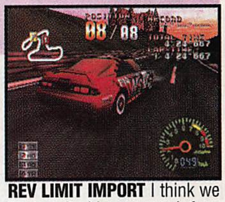
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SOUL HACKERS ORIGINAL MUSIC CD This gem of a soundtrack hides around ever corner just waiting for your arrival. From the opening theatrical pound session to the brooding dark ambient underlyings, you know immediately that this is something special. ***$call***



EVANGELION VOL # 1 ORIGINAL MUSIC CD From a series with an unspoken biblical feel present at all times, comes a CD that will start the beginning of your collection. Tracks include the infamous opening theme as well as other meditative requiem tracks that complete this spiritual package. **$17.95**



FINAL FANTASY PRAY MUSIC CD There is something about classical instrumentation mixed with a foreign language that seems to work. The ingenious works of "In The Nursery" is a perfect example, another is Pray. Combining all your favorite FF backing with seamless Japanese vocals. **$19.95**



EVANGELION: THE END OF EVANGELION ORIGINAL MUSIC CD From Sinatra's moon trips to the closing themes of ambiance and beauty you can always depend on each and every Eva CD to give you that unexplainable celestial brilliance. Many tracks will float you along into new worlds of transcendental passions and musical soaring. **$19.95**



TEKKEN # 3 ORIGINAL MUSIC CD If you have stood in front of the Tekken 3 cabinet in the arcades, then obviously you have heard the #@~*/-&+#@ absolute insane tunes pumping out of the speakers, correct? Tekken 3 is a shred fest of bass pounding, techno squealing, musical mayhem. **$34.95**



TEKKEN 3 BATTLE TRAX MUSIC CD A jamming arrangement of all the characters battle stages, including the hidden end killmieser. Throwing the listener back and forth between hard grinding metal~esque landscapes to disco techno trances. Pure and Simple, good stuff. **$38.95**



CHRONO TRIGGER ORIGINAL 3 CD SET MUSIC CD There is something unexplainable about the first track of this triple disc. Even if you have heard it a thousand times it still continues to give you that internal feeling of calm. Considering this CD is actually some what dated, (over 4 years old) it still holds it own against other square works, even surpassing in many cases. **$43.95**



PARASITE EVE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK MUSIC CD No this isn't the actual soundtrack to the upcoming "take over all" Playstation title by Square. But at the same time I really cant imagine it wont be extremely close to the same sound. With the story of the movie being adapted as the premise for the game, Mr. Joe Hisaishi does not disappointed in this truly unique CD. **$24.95**



FINAL FANTASY SYMPHONIC SUITE MUSIC CD Take every single one of your ideal favorite FF pieces, the ones you never get tired of hearing, and supply a 60 piece orchestra with the sheet music to those works. That is FFSS. At times, sparse, pretty piano lines float over shimmering walls of cello and violin creating an essence of musical purity never experienced before. **$23.95**



LANGRISSER 3 ORIGINAL MUSIC CD As triumphantly breathtaking as it is violent, dark and disturbing, all rolled into one musical catacomb. This very unknown CD is a must for anyone looking for something deviant. As placid as it is soft, as raw as it is fresh, you must listen for yourself to understand. **$17.95**

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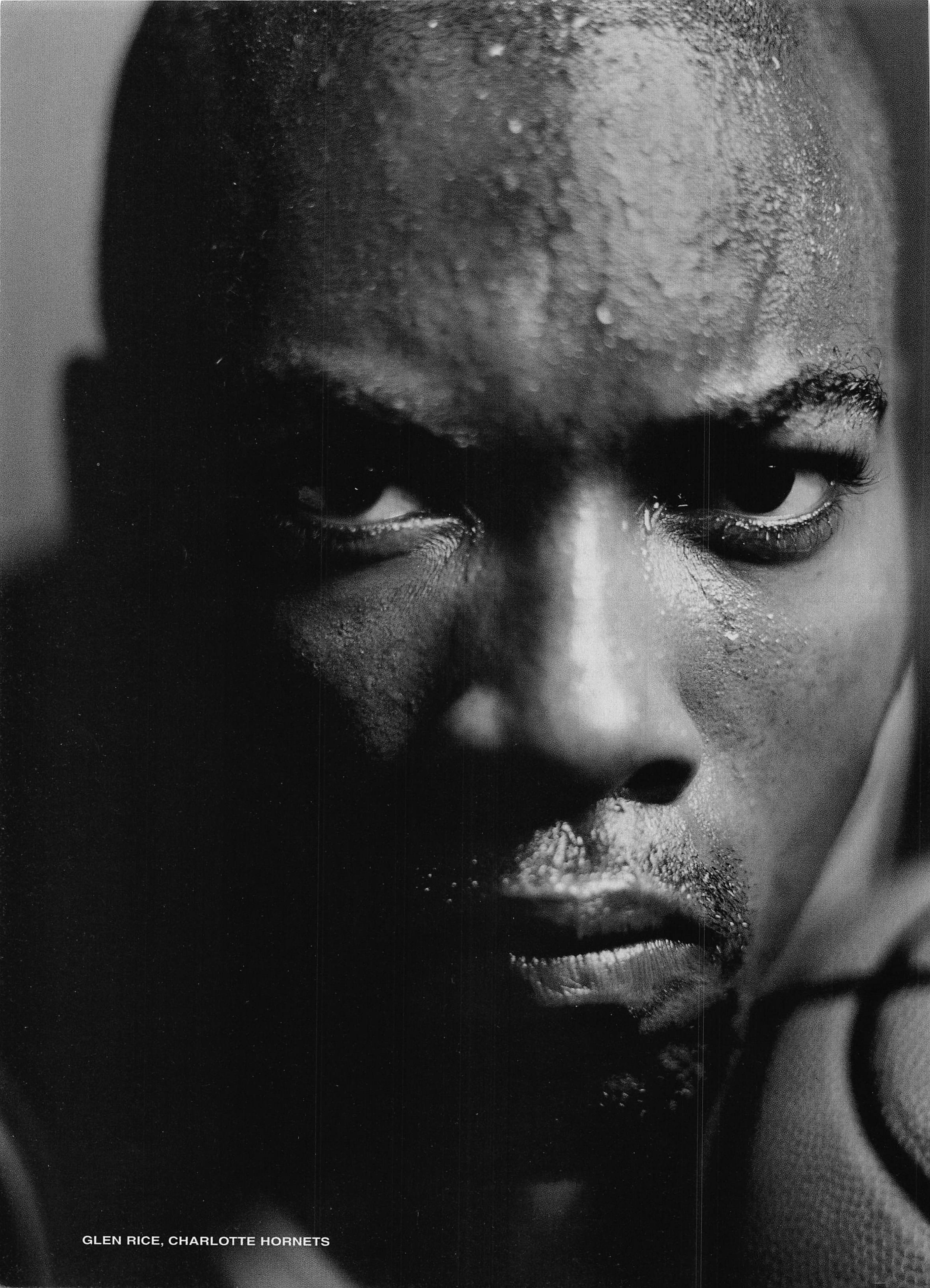
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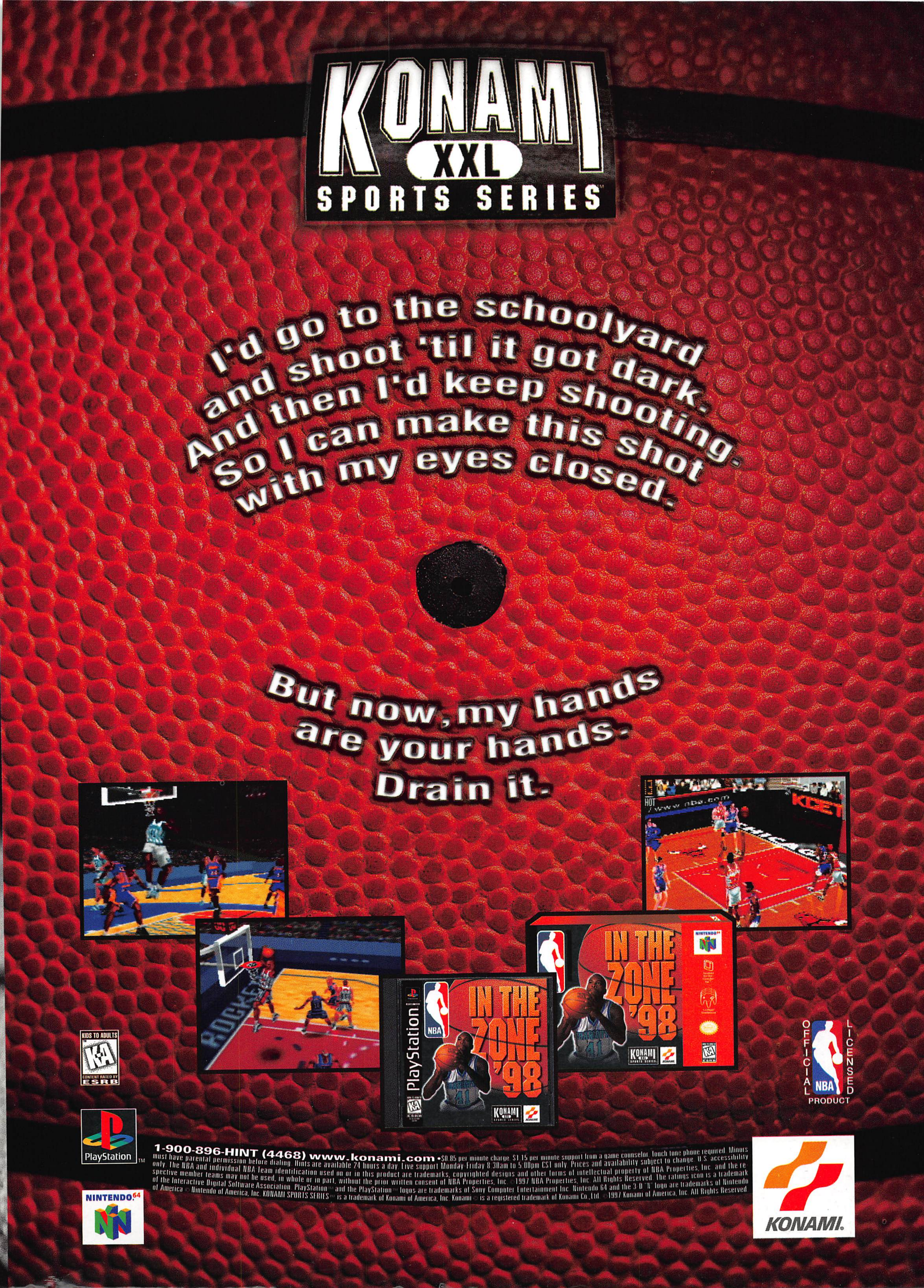
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GLEN RICE, CHARLOTTE HORNETS



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I'd go to the schoolyard and shoot 'til it got dark. And then I'd keep shooting. So I can make this shot with my eyes closed.
But now, my hands are your hands. Drain it.
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IN THE ZONE '98
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Drive large.
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